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REGNUM EDINBURGH CENTENARY SERIES
Volume 13

Foundations for Mission



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REGNUM EDINBURGH CENTENARY SERIES

The Centenary of the World Missionary Conference of 1910, held in Edinburgh, was a suggestive moment for many people seeking direction for Christian mission in the twenty-first century. Several different constituencies within world Christianity held significant events around 2010. From 2005, an international group worked collaboratively to develop an intercontinental and multi-denominational project, known as Edinburgh 2010, and based at New College, University of Edinburgh. This initiative brought together representatives of twenty different global Christian bodies, representing all major Christian denominations and confessions, and many different strands of mission and church life, to mark the Centenary.

Essential to the work of the Edinburgh 1910 Conference, and of abiding value, were the findings of the eight think-tanks or ‘commissions’. These inspired the idea of a new round of collaborative reflection on Christian mission – but now focused on nine themes identified as being key to mission in the twenty-first century. The study process was polycentric, open-ended, and as inclusive as possible of the different genders, regions of the world, and theological and confessional perspectives in today’s church. It was overseen by the Study Process Monitoring Group: Miss Maria Aranzazu Aguado (Spain, The Vatican), Dr Daryl Balia (South Africa, Edinburgh 2010), Mrs Rosemary Dowsett (UK, World Evangelical Alliance), Dr Knud Jørgensen (Norway, Areopagos), Rev. John Kafwanka (Zambia, Anglican Communion), Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum (Korea, World Council of Churches), Dr Wonsuk Ma (Korea, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies), Rev. Dr Kenneth R. Ross (UK, Church of Scotland), Dr Petros Vassiliadis (Greece, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), and coordinated by Dr Kirsteen Kim (UK, Edinburgh 2010).

These publications reflect the ethos of Edinburgh 2010 and will make a significant contribution to ongoing studies in mission. It should be clear that material published in this series will inevitably reflect a diverse range of views and positions. These will not necessarily represent those of the series’ editors or of the Edinburgh 2010 General Council, but in publishing them the leadership of Edinburgh 2010 hopes to encourage conversation between Christians and collaboration in mission. All the series’ volumes are commended for study and reflection in both church and academy.

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REGNUM EDINBURGH CENTENARY SERIES
Volume 13

Foundations for Mission

Edited by Emma Wild-Wood and Peniel Rajkumar

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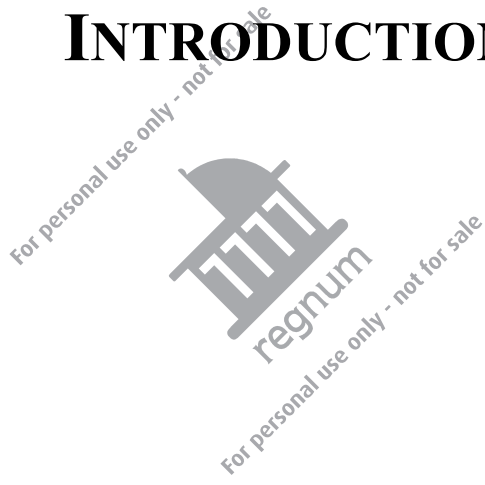
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INTRODUCTION



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EXPLORING FOUNDATIONS FOR MISSION

Emma Wild-Wood and Peniel Rajkumar

Foundations for this Book

The loving, relational nature of God and the outpouring of God's Trinitarian self into the world are the source of mission. The calling of God's creatures to participate in God's love and care for the world is our mandate. Such is the comprehension of the foundation for mission that gained prominence in the twentieth century. It places mission at the centre of the being and activity of Father, Son and Spirit – God's heartbeat.¹ Thus mission is at the centre of theology and of Christian action. The development of such an understanding can be traced, in part, to a trend for missionary research, reflection, structures and organisations that arose from the World Missionary Conference of 1910 and its antecedents.² As part of a centennial commemoration of that conference, a worldwide appraisal of mission theology and practice has been undertaken focussing upon nine main themes and culminating in a conference in Edinburgh in 2010. This book is part of that venture: it presents the work of those involved in the study process which examined the first theme, 'Foundations for Mission' and contributes to a series that re-examines Christian mission at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Drawing from many Christian traditions across the globe this volume asks: What is foundational for our participation in the *missio dei*? What elements do we discern as the basis for mission involvement? How do we understand and use those elements?

The 1910 conference marked a transition between missionary eras.³ The hope and optimism which had grown in the missionary movement during the nineteenth century and was articulated in the conference watchword, 'The Evangelisation of the World in this Generation' was to be challenged by the brutality and destruction of the First World War (1914-1918) and the subsequent waning confidence in western civilisation. The conference also set a trend for greater missionary collaboration, ecumenical endeavour and increased study of Christian mission by consulting, gathering together and

¹ 'Theme 1: Foundations for Mission', in Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (eds), *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011), 120.

² For more details see, Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

³ Emma Wild-Wood, 'Worldwide Shifts in Mission from 1910-2010 – A Sketch', *Theology* (SPCK), May-June 2010, CXIII, 873.

developing missiological thought. Although, a century later, the 1910 constituency of mainly western men from protestant churches and mission agencies, focusing largely on missionary strategy seems very limited, the conference also glimpsed a nascent reality, a truly worldwide church.⁴ Some years before 2010, a number of conversations began in order to study the changes in mission studies since 1910 and collaboratively to create a new vision for mission across the globe in the twenty-first century.⁵ A focus for these conversations was the conference in Edinburgh in June 2010⁶ at which representatives from many churches across the globe met to reflect on the subjects that had been chosen for study. The study process itself continued beyond the conference and has included many more people, from a greater diversity of backgrounds, than any single conference could hope to contain. The collection of essays in this book is the fruit of one set of conversations in this process. It focuses on one of the nine subjects chosen for reflection: the foundations on which missionary activity is based. The 2010 study process followed the 1910 pattern of commissioning study themes although the topics under discussion, the methods of study and the constituencies from which contributors were drawn were different and more varied than in 1910. Those who offered to take up the study of subjects came from churches, mission agencies, universities and theological seminaries throughout the world. There was a focus on theology and on responding reflectively to significant contemporary issues, with much less emphasis on the strategies that were so important in 1910. Whilst the framework and organisation acknowledged a debt to 1910 there was a constant critique of the assumptions and worldviews present in 1910.

This book developed through conversations over almost three years. At their centre was a gathering of some of the contributors in Bossey, Switzerland, in May 2009 for some formal and convivial face-to-face conversations. The aim of our discussion was to produce a chapter for the pre-conference book. We discussed, debated, and wrote together. We disagreed, misunderstood one another, unpicked one another's assumptions and listened to different perspectives. We worshipped, prayed, shared food and even danced together. All of which was infused with the heady perfume of wisteria in full-bloom. Our conversation was informed by the participants' missional engagement in a variety of contexts, and most particularly through the sharing of two projects that had already been focussing on the Foundations for Mission theme for two years, one in the

⁴ Kenneth R Ross and David A Kerr 'The Commissions After a Century', in David A Kerr and Kenneth R Ross (eds), *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now* (Oxford: Regnum, 2009), 314.

⁵ Kirsteen Kim, 'Conference Study Process', in Kim and Anderson (eds), *Mission Today and Tomorrow*, 51-53.

⁶ The Edinburgh Conference was one of a number of mission conferences held in 2010, significant among them were those held in Cape Town, Tokyo and Boston.

UK and one in India.⁷ Corresponding contributors read and commented upon the draft in e-mail and Skype conversations, and the published chapter, 'Foundations for Mission,' (Appendix 1) contributed to further conversation at the Edinburgh conference (Appendix 2).⁸ A year later e-mail conversations resumed as we prepared to elaborate on the 'Foundations for Mission' chapter and explore its themes in greater detail and diversity. Whereas the chapter was an exercise in distillation, generalisation and consensus, the book has, within certain parameters, allowed contributors to explore their own reflections in greater depth and to pursue particular areas of interest. The diversity of the essays presented reflects and refracts different dimensions of the theme – foundations of mission – thus testifying to its encompassing nature. It was imperative to resist the temptation to systematise the theme in a parochial and monochromatic manner in order to do justice to the pluriformity that exists even within the three foundations for mission recognised in this book, namely the experiential, theological and biblical. Therefore, it is appropriate that the number of contributors has expanded to twenty-one to include a larger range of voices, both globally and ecumenically, supporting our conviction that missiology is richest when it is polyvalent and polyvocal. In order to highlight the polyvocal character of the writings we have asked writers to prepare an abstract in their first language (where it is not English). The use of English as a *lingua franca* has enabled us to converse together but it has also meant that some work harder at the conversation than others, or feel that they have not adequately communicated. The use of a *lingua franca* bridges some gaps but as it smoothes the way it also flattens and distorts. The abstracts are a reminder of the many voices, cultures and societies that participate in God's mission and of the imbalances and inequalities in the world in which we live.

We are grateful to the contributors for making themselves available to write in a relatively short space of time. They are all part of worshipping Christian communities, and write from a position of commitment to the church. Many are teachers or church leaders facilitating those training for ministry with missional approaches, some work among the poorest communities in their countries, others are grappling with issues raised by pluralist, secular, or consumerist societies. Some represent mission crossing cultures, others mission among their own people. We may work to hear voices from the margins but we recognise that the form and level of our

⁷ These research projects had their own conversation circles. For more information on their findings see chapters 1 and 2 of this volume, and also Anne Richards et al., *Foundations for Mission: A Study of Language, Theology and Praxis from the UK and Ireland Perspective* (London: CTBI Publishing, 2010), and Peniel Rajkumar and Dayam Joseph Pabhakar, *Mission at and from the Margins: A Critical and Constructive Study on Christian Mission* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011).

⁸ 'Theme 1: Foundations for mission,' 119-126, & 'Appendix 6', 401-2, in Kim and Anderson (eds), *Mission Today and Tomorrow*.

own education, at least, make us members of elites. Contributions come from five continents and members of the four main Christian traditions: Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant – both ecumenical and evangelical – and Pentecostal. We have tried to be eclectic but there are all too obvious limitations, imbalances and omissions in representation. Our regret that a wider constituency is not represented is only tempered by the satisfaction of producing a concise volume rather than the hefty and daunting tome necessary for fuller inclusion. We commend other books in the Edinburgh 2010 series which include voices less well represented here. The end result we hope is not simply polyphonic, but symphonic, even where harmony is achieved through counter point, dissonance and diverse movements. We hope that it engenders further conversation beyond its pages as part of a continual process of missional engagement and reflection.

Missiological Foundations in the Twentieth Century

The twentieth century fostered the development of what Lamin Sanneh calls ‘post-Western Christianity’ – which has been characterised by an unprecedented ‘worldwide Christian resurgence... that seems to proceed without Western organizational structures, including academic recognition, and is occurring amidst widespread political instability and the collapse of public institutions.’⁹ But the course of this demographic shift of Christianity has been accompanied by new challenges for mission at every stage. Those active in mission have been required to take seriously issues of religious plurality, wealth and poverty and multiculturalism, all of which have had an impact not only on the modes and means of mission but also on the motivations for mission. As a result of attention to new circumstances new paradigms of mission emerged in the twentieth century.¹⁰ Four particular shifts, identified by Stephen Bevans,¹¹ require special mention:

- the shift in the *content* of mission i.e. the shift from John R. Mott’s missionary call to ‘Evangelize the World’ (1910) to a multi-faceted understanding of mission as Mediating Salvation, as the Quest for Justice, as Evangelization, as Contextualization, as

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⁹ Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans, 2003).

¹⁰ For an analysis of changing paradigms of mission see David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll, NY; Orbis, 1991).

¹¹ Stephen Bevans, ‘From Edinburgh to Edinburgh: Towards a Missiology for a World Church’, Peter Vethanayagomony, et al (eds), *Mission after Christendom: Emergent Themes in Contemporary Mission* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 1-11.

Liberation, as Inculturation, as Interfaith witness and as Action in hope.¹²

- the shift in the *means* of mission from power to vulnerability and with it a shift in *agency* for mission i.e. a transition from understanding mission as the exclusive specialist activity of mission specialists to understanding mission as *missio Dei* – the mission of God. This led to further understanding mission in terms of partnership with others outside Christian faith. Notable among the paradigms which emphasised this shift in agency were the understanding of mission as the ‘Church-with-Others’, mission as *missio Dei*, and mission as ‘Ministry of the Whole People of God’.¹³
- The shift in *context* for mission i.e. no longer is there a euro-centric or west-to-rest comprehension of global mission but a recognition of the world church participating in God’s mission everywhere-to-everywhere.
- The shift in *attitude* in mission i.e. the enlightenment values that claimed universality and gave certainty to the modern western world have been critiqued and questioned. In their stead we have post-modern attitudes, pluriform, questioning and alert to the particular.

All these shifts could in some ways be related to various alterations in understanding Christianity’s missional relationship to the world, which itself emerged out of changes in comprehending God’s relationship to the world. There was a strong focus on the world as both the arena and medium of God’s activity which provided the cues to understand mission both in terms of engagement *with* the world and engagement *along with* the world. The recognition that God’s will of salvation takes place in the concrete realities of history enabled the rethinking of the old adage ‘*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*’ (outside the church no salvation) in terms of ‘*extra mundum nulla salus*’ (outside the world no salvation).¹⁴ ‘Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation’ (WCC, 1982), commonly referred to as the EA (Ecumenical Affirmation), acknowledged that ‘the consciousness of the global nature of poverty and exploitation of the world today, the knowledge of the interdependence between nations and the understanding of the international missionary responsibility of the church – all invite, in fact oblige, every church and every Christian to think of ways and means to share the good news with the poor of today’. Building further upon the

¹² For more on these see Norman Thomas (ed), *Readings in World Mission*, (London: SPCK, 1995).

¹³ For more on these see Norman Thomas (ed), *Readings in World Mission* (London: SPCK, 1995).

¹⁴ For an analysis of Roman Catholic missiology that follows this trajectory, see the chapter by Robert Schreiter in this volume, and for concerns raised by evangelical Protestants see the chapter by Harold Segura and Valdir Steuernagel.

WCC document *The Church for Others and the Church for the World: A Quest for Structures for Missionary Congregations* (1967), which raised the issue of 'Christ outside the walls of the Church', the fourth assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Uppsala in 1968 affirmed the need for the church(es) to enter into 'open and humble partnership with all who work for the goals of 'greater justice, freedom and dignity' and recognise these goals as a part of the restoration of the true (personhood) in Christ'.¹⁵

A positive affirmation that the created world is the medium through which God engages in divine-human dialogue so we can know God and God's mission through attending to the created world, and, therefore we can also discern our mission as children of God through understanding the world God has made, characterised important missiological phases of the twentieth century. This is not altogether unrelated to the conviction that as God's action is revealed through concrete actions, Christian mission must also be expressed through concrete actions in partnership with others.

The twentieth century provides us with a remarkable diversity of missiological approaches even in relation to one particular aspect of mission. That is why, for example, in relation to the interfaith aspect of mission we have approaches as diverse as John Nicol Farquhar's understanding of Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of religions (1913), Hendrick Kraemer's (1938) advocacy of 'Christ as the ultimate standard of relevance' to evaluate all religious truth-claims, the Vatican II document, 'Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,' popularly known as *Nostra Aetate* (1965), which is call to 'acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture' and the Catholic study centre SEDOS's encouragement to 'seek to find Christ already present in the other person'.¹⁶ This diversity of approaches can be attributed to the different ways in which missional foundations are used. As Schreiter acknowledges 'our way of conducting intended to be'.¹⁷ This understanding of mission was to a large extent shaped by theological convictions, informed by biblical witness and given expression in forms which were discerningly responsive to the signs of the times – all of which can be described as foundations for mission, the subject of this book.

Edinburgh 2010 took place in a climate which acknowledged the demographical shift of Christianity towards the global South and was foregrounded by the recognition of the non-western nature of Christianity. As

¹⁵ Norman Goodall (ed), *The Uppsala Report: Official Report of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (WCC Geneva, 1968), 27-29.

¹⁶ Short excerpts from these documents can be found in Norman Thomas (ed), *Readings in World Mission* (London: SPCK, 1995), 262-286.

¹⁷ Robert Schreiter, 'Mission from the Ground Up: Themes in Contemporary Mission', in Peter Vethanayagomony, et al (eds), *Mission After Christendom: Emergent Themes in Contemporary Mission* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 16.

the theme of the pre-conference preparatory publication, 'Mission in Christ's way', indicated – one could discern the general shift in thinking about mission from 'missions', to 'Church's mission' to 'Christ's mission'. The focus on strategy which prevailed at 1910 gave way to a focus on theology at 2010. If Stephen Bevans instructively identifies missiological shifts from euro-centric to world church, from modernity to post-modernity, from power to vulnerability, and from missions to church, Robert Schreiter introduces us to four sites of contemporary mission. He identifies them as reimagining secularity, accompanying the bottom billion, revisiting the religious interface, tracing the unintended consequences of globalization – to which attention needs to be paid as possible places 'where we might be observing a new call to mission'. It needs to be mentioned that these sites are themselves offshoots of twentieth century developments and hence not altogether discontinuous with the twentieth century, though they set the agenda for missional engagement in the twenty first century. Therefore, when we speak of foundations for mission, the quest is not so much to invent new foundations but to acknowledge what has undergirded mission so far. An excursus into the language of foundations itself may be in order at this point.

The Need for Foundations

In what sense can we speak of foundations for or of mission?¹⁸ A well-built house requires foundations. A foundation is a vital and integral part of a building. The whole structure is dependent upon solid foundations. The most frequent New Testament use of the word 'foundation' concerns the being and work of God in creation. The phrase 'foundation of the world' signifies the existence of God beyond all that we, the created, know and can experience. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ uses a metaphor of solid foundations when he calls people to act on his words and tells the parable of the houses built on sand and rock (Lk 6:46-49, Mt 7:24-29). The emphasis here is on praxis rather than belief. The letter to the Ephesians calls this church to understand their foundations as being upon the 'apostles and prophets' with Jesus as the 'chief cornerstone.'¹⁹ The image of the cornerstone associated with foundations is taken up by Peter with dynamic effect.²⁰ He moves from the fixed image of a building to the paradoxical image of the 'living stone'. First, Christ is referred to as the living stone, then his followers, in a reference to the Temple, are described as being 'a spiritual house.' From this it can be seen that the foundation is a description of God as both pre-existent and beyond eschatological promise.

¹⁸ This paragraph relies extensively on the insights provided by Janice Price during the preparatory group meeting in Bossey in May 2009.

¹⁹ Ephesians 2:20.

²⁰ 1 Pet 2:4-10.

God is within, above and beyond creation history and as such is the foundation not only of the church but of life itself. If mission is seen as the out-flowing of the life of the Trinity,²¹ then in this sense God is the foundation of mission.

Many buildings have their foundations sunk deep in the ground, they are vitally important but invisible and ignored. In some parts of the world, however, houses are raised on stilts. Their foundations are visible and may form part of the living function of the building. This book attempts to raise foundations, to dig away at invisible assumptions about how we understand mission and to ensure that missional foundations not only support but are part of the lived-in fabric of mission. To extend the metaphor further, we all build our foundations differently. The continuing spread of Christianity across the globe in the twentieth century and the different movements, churches, and missiologies that have developed in the encounter between Christ and peoples-in-their-contexts demonstrates the plural possibilities for the Christian gospel. When we construct our missiological foundations we use different materials and methods and these impact the acts of mission that develop. Some of these materials are shared in this volume. This approach seems relevant in a postmodern/post-foundational context characterised by suspicion towards metanarratives and notions of objectivity. The postmodern condition has emphasised the need to pay attention to the particular and to be explicit about one's subjectivity and one's own assumptions.²²

We may be tempted to think we have no foundations or that they are unnecessary, or we may think our particular way of constructing foundations is the only one. The authors are aware that subscribing to notions of 'foundations' is contested. There are those who express incredulity towards anything which claims to be foundational. Yet, in relation to mission, one cannot easily bypass the notion of foundations. This is because, Christian mission on the one hand 'derives' its rationale from something *apriori* and is 'directed' towards something. The notions of rationale and objective determine the shape and course of mission and they are, in some sense, foundations. Perhaps those who contest 'foundationalism' run the risk of redundancy because they themselves are tacitly foundational – i.e. their 'foundation' is that there are no foundations. However, their voices also cannot be discounted or ignored. In such a context one may need to move beyond understanding foundations in monolithic and rigid terms but leave space for recognising the hybrid, shifting, and polysemic nature of foundations. Furthermore, use of missional foundations, even among those who accept the term, is not the same. Therefore foundations have to be visible, debated and understood in

²¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390-1.

²² Desmond van der Water et al (eds), *Postcolonial Mission: Power and Partnership in World Christianity* (Upland, CA; Sopher Press, 2011).

relation to their context. In line with such an approach, contributors were asked to write for one of the sections of the book, developing upon the themes discussed at the Edinburgh 2010 conference and available in the 'Foundations for Mission' chapter of *Witnessing to Christ Today*,²³ and bringing missional insights from their church tradition, their area of the world and their previous reflection. As the contributors in their particular ways address the theme of foundations for mission they provide tools that can be used to ensure that the foundations are strong and secure wherever they are put down.

Which Foundations for Mission?

Three broad foundations for a theology of mission are identified and explored in this volume. Mission begins with the nature of the loving, triune God, the intentions and actions of God are revealed to humanity by the Holy Spirit, through the vehicles of God's word, the Bible, our experience and theology.²⁴ It is these three elements that are identified here as foundations for mission. The discussions at the Edinburgh conference led in a slightly different direction and the organising scheme developed in that forum identified the *missio Dei*, the church and the Kingdom of God as the three foundational elements for a *theology* of mission. The scheme used here understands theology, Bible and experience as equipping the church to participate in the *missio Dei* in order to bring in the Kingdom, as will become clear in the chapters. It will also be apparent that the foundations of Bible, experience and theology inform and complement each other and, as such, contributors have found it impossible to focus on one theme without straying into the others. Jacques Matthey's chapter, for example, focuses on the book of Proverbs but examines the way experience within that Biblical book may enhance a theology of mission.

Other schemas have been used elsewhere in order to reflect upon mission practice. Among a number of global Protestant churches the Five Marks of Mission have become a familiar way of identifying mission action.²⁵ Proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom, teaching, baptising, and nurturing new believers, responding to human need by loving service, transforming unjust structures of society, and striving to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustaining and renewing the life of the earth are the five marks. The Bible, theology and experience, the foundations for

²³ Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim (eds) *Edinburgh 2010: Witnessing Today* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010).

²⁴ This division is akin to a familiar identification of the sources of theology as scripture, tradition and reason.

²⁵ Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross (eds) *Mission in the Twenty-first Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2008).

mission suggested in this volume, can be used to measure and to reflect upon the missiological action of the marks.

Experience has been placed first in this volume not because all the contributors necessarily considered it of prior importance but because the acknowledged place of experience in the study of mission is recent and it is controversial. It has come to the fore in the twentieth century in an overt way in recognition that mission has to be informed by and interact with human experiences if it is to have a concrete meaning and manifestation. The rise of the social sciences and their influence on theology has influenced this trend. The growth of a world church is a more significant factor and with it the recognition that different circumstances, a variety of encounters with the numinous, translations into different languages, and so forth, make particularity significant in the way we understand the mission of God. Furthermore, philosophical trends often called postmodernism and post-colonialism have provided critiques of enlightenment thought and of imperialism, and they question universalising discourses that present the experience of a single tradition or culture as normative. The study of contextual theologies²⁶ is one result of this approach, so are Biblical hermeneutics that draw upon the circumstances of the reader as an interpretive tool.²⁷ Thus an acceptance that some experiences can illuminate Biblical texts and aid spiritual discernment has become common. Those who welcome this approach insist that it has ever been this way; all theological and Biblical reflection, all recourse to tradition, have been influenced by our experience. The difference today, they say, is that it is acknowledged, and can therefore be both critiqued more effectively and better used in mission. They suggest that experience informs mission and provides a rationale for mission in interaction with biblical and theological foundations, sometimes even challenging us to rethink those foundations and rediscover their relevance afresh apart from the normal ways of understanding them. Those who wish to argue for the priority of the Word of God, or theology as articulated by the church as a starting point for missional foundations, are concerned that responding to the vagaries of experience may cause us to lose sight of God's mission in the morass of fallen humanity's impulses; that the Bible and theology provide the stability of God's truth in a shifting and sinful world.

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²⁶ Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (2nd edition, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004).

²⁷ R S Sugirtharajah, *Voices from the Margins: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* (3rd edition, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006) and *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Section 1: Experience

In our conversations it became clear how varied and how vague are the things we have called ‘experience’. The four chapters in these sections examine only some of the possibilities. There is no chapter on the experiential influences upon church tradition, for example, although there is a chapter on the importance of recognising historical events as formative for mission (Mitchell). Questions are suggested: Is the experience that is influential as a basis for mission ‘everything-that-is,’ the context of culture, politics, economics, day-to-day events (Price and Richards)? Or does missiology prioritise certain experiences: the degradation of the marginalised, in order that they might be liberated (Manchala, Rajkumar, Prabhakar); the cultural traditions and customs of a people; the interior, spiritual experience of a relationship with God (Karavaltcheva); or the destruction of God’s created order?

Section 2: The Bible

The second section encompasses hermeneutics and biblical theology at the service of missiology. It demonstrates how the Bible is read in different locations – Latin America, the Middle East, Africa and Europe – with an emphasis on different sorts of mission. Once again the chapters suggest, overtly or covertly, a number of questions. Who reads the Bible? How do they read the Bible (Kumalo)? What role do particular books and passages play in the formation of a missiology? How do they illuminate the *missio dei* and our role in mission (Matthey and Mikhael)? What is the impact of geo-politics, national power or gender dynamics in reading the texts? What are the tensions that exist in relating the Bible to mission (Míguez)?

Section 3: Theology

This section, drawing upon Catholic, Pentecostal, Protestant and Orthodox traditions, explores how our theology impacts our understanding of mission. The contributors have addressed a number of familiar doctrines within a *missio Dei* framework. The subjects chosen indicate doctrines that have been significant for missiology in the last century. Reflection upon the Trinity remains central, therefore, but So provides it with a Christocentric emphasis, whilst Manohar’s chapter reflects the rise in pneumatology over twentieth century, both as a lived spirituality and doctrinal exploration. Both these chapters are informed by religious thought beyond Christianity. Ecclesiology and eschatology are prominent in the chapter by Vassiliadis. Chia draws together multiple theological themes to develop the mission-as-dialogue approach which has risen to prominence in the Asian Catholic church.

Section 4: Foundations Together

What is the relationship between experience and the Bible and theology? How do they inform one another? The contributors of the final section were asked to draw the three foundations together and to address the ways in which they have been applied in their own particular church tradition. Three of the chapters (by Schreiter, Ma, Segura and Steuernagel) take a broad sweep across space and time to explain the development of mission thinking within their own tradition over half a century or more. One (Morgensen) takes a more focused approach and examines his particular national tradition, yet in ways which will resonate throughout Protestant Western Europe at least. The chapters highlight overlapping developments between traditions and demonstrate divergent emphases in structural organisation, in reflection, in action. They point forward to future trends.

Conclusion

Robert Schreiter has written of our corporate responsibility as Christians to bear witness to Christ:

Only through such polyphonic witness can we hope to hear how God might be speaking to us. It takes the blend of many voices to achieve this one single world to us.²⁸

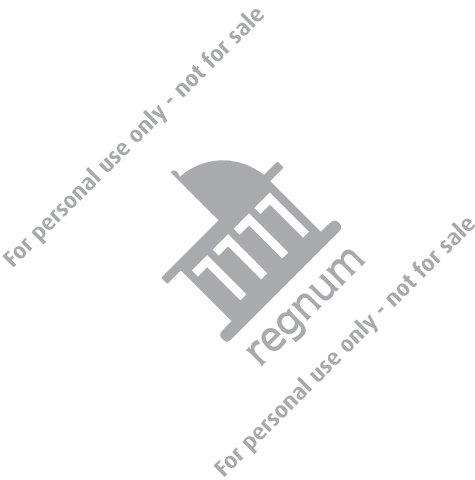
Twenty-one voices is hardly the beginning of such process, a process that includes so many more ways of speaking than are represented here. Nevertheless these words are offered in ‘bold humility’²⁹ knowing that we can only ‘see through a glass darkly’ but that we are witnesses to and participants in the mission of God in our generation who, in our diverse contexts and distinct ways, seek to live our lives in creative fidelity to the gospel of Christ. Even as we offer these words we recognize that there are silences which are yet to be named, concerns that lie unspoken and people who remain invisible. So we extend the horizons of our missional thinking and engagement towards God’s horizons, which alone will enable us to embrace concerns and people previously excluded. In this sense this book is part of a continuing journey with Christ in God’s mission sustained by the Spirit and in the company of all God’s people. It is also about our future with God – in God’s mission – guided by the past and shaped by the present.

²⁸ Schreiter ‘Mission from the Ground Up’, 16.

²⁹ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 489.

PART ONE

**EXPLORING EXPERIENCE
AS A FOUNDATION
FOR MISSION**



THE RESTLESS RESULT BETWEEN 'IS' AND 'OUGHT'

Janice Price and Anne Richards

Introduction

In this paper, we look at one of the puzzles which came out of the research material for *Foundations for Mission*, one of the study themes for the Edinburgh 2010 World Mission Conference.¹ That puzzle was a particular confusion about the ideas of 'mission' and 'justice'. In thinking about this confusion and the apparently problematic juxtaposition of these two concepts, we first look at the issues involved as a case study of evidence from the *Foundations for Mission* research project. We will then go on to look particularly at the role of experience as both generating the complexity surrounding the issues of mission and justice and providing a path through it. This also suggests that we need to interrogate the role of experience more thoroughly. So we look at emerging themes in mission experience, the complex and indeed contentious issues surrounding the use of experience in defining and exploring mission practice. We also suggest ways to develop understandings of experience in mission through reflective practice.

Case Study – Mission and Justice

At the conclusion of our study in *Foundations for Mission*, we argued that:

We might even go so far as to ask whether the foundations for mission have any meaning outside the lived experience of Christians working in the world alongside others, finding out what God is doing.... This has theological implications, because if we assert that mission is God's mission, then we would be arguing that God's mission has no intrinsic human meaning except in so far as it is entrusted to (all?) human beings and thereby becomes apparent and open to theological investigation in mission working itself out within the creation.²

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Effectively this means that in the matter of describing mission activity, people would want to describe contexts which framed what they understood by it. The local interviews conducted as part of the Foundations for Mission research revealed that those interviewed want to tell stories to describe what mission has meant to them, and the process of telling itself

¹ Anne Richards et al, *Foundations for Mission: A Study of Language, Theology and Praxis from the UK and Ireland Perspective* (London: CTBI Publishing, 2010).

² Richards et al, *Foundations*, 107.

informs and contextualises disparate experience into a coherent pattern through which God's work can be discerned. Yet one of the interesting questions is whether there are competing narratives in the outworking of vocation which interfere with one another and create confusions. This was evident particularly where people wondered whether the study was trying to find out what mission is like or what mission should be like. The tension between 'is' and 'ought': the struggle with the reality of things as they are in the world and the vision of what God desires for the world, created difficulties for a number of people. In view of this, it can also be argued that this is a problem of competing narratives, and especially the disjuncture between 'is' and 'ought' which drives the most problematic element which emerged from the research: the difficult relationship between 'mission' and 'justice'.

The confusion about the relationships between the concepts of 'mission' and 'justice' was perhaps unsurprising given the broad sweep of possible definition for both these terms, yet it was necessary to include them because public language about mission often raises issues of 'justice'. A number of statements within the survey prompted comment about what exactly 'justice' might be and this required the researchers to dig deeper into the concept as used by different parts of the church. What is interesting about such an investigation is that it highlighted the role of experience in making decisions about what both 'mission' and 'justice' actually are, and how sense is made of any relationship between the two.

For some Christians, 'justice' is synonymous with God's justice. That is: there is an end time scenario in which God, through Christ, will judge the earth and all that is in it prior to a final reckoning of some kind. In this sense, the focus is on the issue of the way the world 'ought' to be, and mission activity works to bring the world as 'is' into a condition where God can enact its transformation. This perspective fits well with a perspective of mission as proclamation, in which the call to conversion is part of shaping the context for God's reign to begin. This justice, then, is the end of proclamation and call to repentance, when human mission activity, driven by an 'eschatological consciousness' in a 'five-to midnight' sense of urgency, has come to the end of its useful course.³ In this sense, mission can be seen as preparatory; the relation between mission and justice is that mission must take place with a focus on proclamation in order that justice might flow forth from divine action. However, in a missiological worldview which prioritises proclamation on the understanding that God's justice needs to come now, there is the problem (to put it very simply and crudely) of perhaps being seen as ignoring what otherwise could be tried to help a broken and imperfect world. What role then, does experience have in

³ See Wonsuk Ma, 'Theological Motivation for Pentecostal Mission: A Case of Mission as Proclamation' in *Foundations*, 73.

such an eschatological framework, given that these events (as far as we know) are still in God's future?

Wonsuk Ma explains clearly that it is a question of where energy is put and how far proclamation can itself be not only transformative but forward looking, driving people towards the eschatological event. For example, he talks eloquently about the success of drug programmes and the signs and wonders of miraculous change.⁴ Proclamation then, results in two kinds of experience, – the experience of God's reality in the power of worship and the experience of the Spirit's transforming work in the lives of others. Such experience itself is proclamatory. Although very clearly seen in Pentecostal traditions, we should not be surprised also to see mission as proclamation as a default mode of clergy in the local survey, given that, when people look for evidence of God's work in the world it's the commitment to changing lives which most readily confirms our vocation – this is what the church is here for. This experience of real effects flowing from ministry is understandably what ministers are going to draw on when asked about abstract concepts such as mission and justice.

However, when this is viewed on a larger scale, it is not clear whether proclamation per se can enact transformations everywhere or whether such issues are culturally constructed or mediated or are only applicable to those that have ears to hear. In other words, preparing the ground for God's justice to be finally realised, in whatever form that missiological work takes, might be predicated on good and positive experiences where most preaching is done to the converted. What is not clear is whether putting a large amount of energy into mission as proclamation in fact de-sensitises some Christians to the needs of communities who are disenfranchised by mission activity. For example, one woman on a housing estate told a mission team which had planted a church, that she was unable to attend worship because she had no transport, did not feel safe after dark, had no resources and her child had no suitable footwear to make the journey. The mission team had not considered these possible factors in their concerns that the church plant was not attracting members; they had no connections to the lived experience of those unchurched by social circumstance if not by inclination.

This example indicates that for yet other Christians addressing the statement survey in *Foundations for Mission*, 'justice' is synonymous with social justice. That is: it is a mark of mission that human need should be addressed, the wellbeing of our neighbours placed at the top of the mission agenda. Or, that work to transform the world into a picture of God's desire for humans is itself mission. This perspective fits best with the idea of mission as transformation, a means of introducing people to Christian faith by changing the environment around them, offering empowerment, voice and autonomy. In this case experience is related to a high perception of

⁴ *Foundations*, 71 & 74.

what is demonstrably unjust in relation to what is known of God's desire for human beings. Consequently, transformation is required at various levels, including an address to unjust structures. The tricky matter is how far the perception of injustice and the energy needed to address it, can (or should) suppress the sharing of faith as part of the transformative process. People of other faiths and none can (and do) devote themselves to transforming the lives of others for the better. What difference does Christian faith and vocation make in such contexts?

It can be argued perhaps that social justice as part of Christian mission matters because social transformation requires a concomitant desire for the spiritual welfare of human beings in order to ensure that they are enabled to grow and to flourish. For example, Michael Taylor tells the story of a development agency which created a well of clean water in a village to save its women the long walk to obtain water. But the women repeatedly vandalised the well because the walk to find water was important to them, giving them space from the men and the chores of the village and a chance to talk, bond and share together. In improving their lives, the women's voice was ignored: their spiritual needs were not addressed.⁵

Following on from this, it is also necessary to take into account the history of missions where we now know that mission activity, or an action taken in the spirit of Christian social justice has itself caused problems in indigenous populations which have subsequently been unable to flourish. Robert Schreiter has written of a form of colonising people's heads with the gospel as 'the narrative of the lie' where evangelism has simply written over a person's history with God with what we wanted to hear repeated back to us.⁶ Here, then, are competing levels of experience, in which indigenous spirituality has been suppressed and reshaped but not destroyed, so that it resurfaces and comes back with its own demands for justice. For example, in Australia's history, many Aboriginal children were adopted into white Christian families as 'the best thing' for them. A generation since, it is accepted that such actions have not allowed the Aboriginal community to flourish and, in the opinions of some, have amounted to 'cultural genocide'.⁷ Similarly, where mission activity accompanied colonization, the imposition of western perspectives within a Christian cultural hegemony has sometimes obscured the difficult experiences of the receiving people. In such cases, the relationship between mission and justice is now fraught because the gap between what mission 'is' and what mission 'ought' to be is laid out through people's narratives and histories:

⁵ Michael Taylor, personal communication at the Mission Theology Advisory Group 11/6/ 2008.

⁶ See Robert Schreiter, *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992).

⁷ See <http://www.news.com.au/national/pm-moves-to-heal-the-nation/story-e6frfw9-1111115539560> and the Mission Theology Advisory Group paper on the nature of Christian apology online at www.ctbi.org.uk

justice now means addressing the results of inappropriate mission and learning to respond to reverse mission as post-colonial Christians feed their experiences and insights back to us.

Regarding mission as an outflow of the *missio Dei* changes the matter of what 'justice' looks like yet again. If mission is God's mission, then justice can be simultaneously a matter of God's justice within an unrepentant world and God's desire to see the poor and the oppressed lifted up. So here, the question becomes 'what is God doing?' and 'where and how should we be joining in?' In this context one generally accepted criticism of the *missio Dei* – that we can do anything we like in mission and blame God – can also be extended to the notion of justice. For example, if a company is going to build a big factory and create thousands of jobs, but at the expense of eradicating irreplaceable wildlife, what does God 'want': justice for unemployed and suffering families, or justice for creation? Whatever the outcome, God can be praised and blamed in equal measure, rather than facing the difficulties and complexities of moral pressures within mission.

With deeper exploration into the theological questions underlying the relationship between 'mission' and 'justice' it can be seen that the sources of the confusion and hesitation about dealing with statements pairing the two, even when the justice issue is framed as 'development' or 'social justice', are both varied and problematic. There are tensions and even anxieties associated with thinking about mission and justice which have to do with the way religious experience is entered and interpreted. One aspect often not considered, however, is the possibility that the way people commit to a narrative of faith might itself become a form of blinker or even inhibitory to God's work.

Raymond Fung, for example, calls attention to what he calls the Isaiah Vision, an agenda for what God wants to see realised in the world. Thus Isaiah 65:20-23 represents God's own directive to his faithful people: in which children do not die; old people live in dignity; people who build houses live in them; and those who plant vineyards eat the fruit. This vision, says Fung, calls us to action and the action is a fundamentally missiological enterprise working for a community in which the weakest are protected and cared for; work matters and the establishment of home and community provides the context for human flourishing and fulfilment. The experience of health, wellbeing, honest labour and fulfilment themselves become testimony that a faithful people is fulfilling its calling, undergirded by an assumption that faithfulness and obedience are what enable these experiences of human flourishing in the first place.⁸

Yet when Jesus himself begins his ministry with a declaration of another Isaiah agenda, he goes further by indicating that faith itself can be problematic in seeing this agenda fulfilled. Luke 4:18-19 tells us that he

⁸ Raymond Fung, *The Isaiah Vision: An Ecumenical Strategy for Congregational Evangelism* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992).

read the portion in the synagogue which reads 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of the sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour' and then, astonishingly, announces that this scripture has been fulfilled. But also interestingly, Jesus notes that Scripture also says that it is not among the faithful that this work is done, which drives his hearers into a rage against him. The fact of being the faithful somehow gets in the way. This prophetic word of Jesus nearly got him killed and is still working itself out in the ongoing tensions, difficulties and problems in the integration of mission as proclamation with the demands for liberation and social justice. Another way of reading this passage is to argue that Jesus saw perfectly the integration between 'is' and 'ought', as the vision of his Father's will is mapped perfectly onto transformations effected in each of his acts of healing, restoration and liberation. Those people who become signs of God's work in the world experience God's reign in their own being and become testimony for its reality now. Yet for those who have entirely lost sight of the 'ought' and are satisfied with their piety, there is a divorce from God's intention and the *missio Dei* is lost. Thus Jesus draws attention to the fact that the chosen people are not those who end up being healed, liberated or transformed. It is in the widow of Sidon and Naaman the Syrian that those demonstrations of God's power are evidenced.

So another way of reading the tension between understandings of mission and understandings of justice is that mission is the restless result of an imperfect relation between 'is' and 'ought'. Experience says, as it told the disciples, that dealing with the world as it is, is complex and messy and a great deal of the time, the changes we try to effect do not work in the way we would like. The very institution of church can hinder and unjust structures create hedges of bureaucracy and red tape. Yet at the heart of the experience of being a Christian, formed and fuelled in worship, gathered around the creeds and the Lord's Prayer, are the signals of transcendence, the continuing glimpses of the creation as God desires it. That can be seen everywhere, in songs of resistance, in stories of peace and reconciliation, in unrelenting work among those who have forgotten what hope ever felt like. Whether we have any real idea what 'mission' and 'justice' mean, we yearn towards them. So the confusion emerging from *Foundations for Mission* about the issues of mission and justice point to something beyond the 'problem', to a continuing struggle to see what Jesus saw when he arose from worship to say that the Scripture was fulfilled in his person and in his presence. That struggle presents itself in a range of Christian understanding and expression, ranging from signs and wonders to liberation and Minjung theology to challenges to mission theology from third world Christians.

Reflection: Some Themes in the Link Between Mission and Experience

The preparatory paper for the Edinburgh 2010 Study Theme 'Foundations for Mission' identified the three foundations for mission as experience, Scripture and theology.⁹ Theme one of the Parallel Sessions at Edinburgh 2010 entitled 'Foundations for Mission' identified the central foundation of mission more closely as 'the nature of the Triune God and how God works in the world.'¹⁰ One of the questions arising from the case study of the problematic nature of 'mission' in relation to 'justice' is how the role of experience can be usefully integrated with the other two foundations. Consequently, we need to look deeper at the nature of 'experience' itself and develop a reflective practice in mission as a way of integrating the three foundations.

Boundaries

We note that the word 'experience' is commonly used in mission debates and discussions but its meaning seems to be rarely defined.¹¹ Essentially, experience, as understood in the language of mission, is concerned with its human elements. Its foundational place acknowledges that mission fundamentally includes encounter across human boundaries and there is now an increasingly urgent emphasis on understanding how mission interrogates the boundaries between humanity and creation.¹² The extraordinary nature of Christian mission is that it takes both individual Christians and the church beyond areas of familiarity and challenges commonly held preconceptions and assumptions as God is experienced in another person or another culture. The importance of experience in mission is an acknowledgement of the central place in mission for relationship. Mission is essentially about relationship with God and with neighbour – and so projects, funding schemes and mission visits need to be reflective of relationships and friendship across cultures.

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⁹ Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim (eds), *Witnessing to Christ Today* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010), 12-13.

¹⁰ Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson, *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011), 119.

¹¹ Bishop Michael Doe, Ann Morisy and Wonsuk Ma, the three speakers at the BIAMS conference in 2009 whose papers are included in *Foundations*, 51-76, were particularly helpful in speaking with greater clarity about the role of experience in mission.

¹² The fifth mark of mission says that mission requires a commitment 'to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of earth.' See *Foundations*, 15.

Personal and Corporate

It is also important to remember that experience is both personal and corporate. It is a movement between the 'I' and the 'we' as these are understood and practiced differently in different cultures. The African understanding of *ubuntu* which means 'I am because we are' stands in stark contrast to the Western individualism inherited from the European Enlightenment. Experience in mission happens both on an individual and corporate level in the life of the church when the church is looking beyond her inner life and seeking to discern God at work in the world. We can see that this adds to the complexity of determining a relationship between mission and justice – what kind of individual and corporate experience denotes transformation, conversion or the eschatological vision?

Agency and Reception

We can see from the case study that experience in mission involves both agency and reception and these are important in distinguishing the complexity of mission experience. Theologically, the *missio Dei* places the primary agency in Christian mission with God the Holy Trinity. However, human agency is also integral to the *missio Dei*. 2 Corinthians 5 for example, speaks of God's church being entrusted with a message of reconciliation.

So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.¹³

This ministry of reconciliation involves human agency as well as divine agency. God the Holy Trinity has chosen to work through human agency even in its flawed and sinful state. Such is the nature of God's call to the church to participate with him in mission in the world. It is a partnership of gracious gift from the giver and grateful receiving which leads to response of love.¹⁴ The essential nature of humanity as made in the image of God¹⁵ establishes the relationship between God and humanity as one of partnership. Such partnership comes between subservience, where there is no place for human agency, and domination where humanity takes authority into its own hands.¹⁶ The human agents participating in God's mission must always acknowledge that they are first and foremost receivers of God's grace.

¹³ 2 Corinthians 5:19-20, NRSV.

¹⁴ See particularly, J V Taylor on 'God's Partners' in *The Uncancelled Mandate* on the nature of this partnership (London: Church House Publishing, 1998), 11-21.

¹⁵ Genesis 1:27.

¹⁶ See Mission Theology Advisory Group, *Presence and Prophecy* (London: CHP/CTBI Publishing, 2002), 25-29, on the nature of *missio Dei* theology. Also see Michael Doe 'Mission as *missio Dei*' in *Foundations*, 52-53.

Experience also involves reception. If agency means causation and taking initiative then reception implies having things happen to individuals and communities over which they may have limited control. Receptive experience in mission notably highlights the experience of the poor and dispossessed and their place in the *missio Dei*. This is another reason why 'mission' and 'justice' may be so difficult to reconcile, since what we can claim to see as 'justice' may be understood as anything but, as in the story of the women at the well. Yet in many instances it is this 'doing to' which characterises understandings of mission despite biblical and theological arguments for a privileged experience for the poor of God's compassion and mercy. Indeed the vulnerable may experience a particular openness to knowledge of God. Agency then can have unintended consequences and the history of Christian mission records many examples of the demeaning of local culture because of an over-association (?) of the Gospel and culture of the incoming people. The growing trend of reverse mission is an example of the historically Western agents of mission having now to make sense of becoming receivers in mission.

Life Affirming and Life-Denying

'Whose experience?' is an important question, as positive and life-affirming experience for one community may result in life-denying experience for another. The example of some short-term mission visits from churches in the West can be experienced in host communities as life-denying if there has been insufficient listening, planning and cultural awareness in the process. Such visits while of very great benefit for the visitors can have a negative impact on host communities. So in the story of the church plant above we could ask who is supposed to gain from the mission initiative? The problem of determining successful mission with increase of justice in communities shows that there is a need for a realistic assessment of the impact of both agency and reception on local communities.

Power

We have said that, theologically, Christian mission concerns the nature of God and involves both an agency and a receptivity that has the freedom of love. While God the Holy Trinity is the primary agent of mission and gives freely of his love, the response of the church is also one of love. Christian mission fails when and where this is not present. The socio-political exercise of power forms the background to global mission. The work of Paulo Freire¹⁷ is foundational for these understandings as his work of conscientization with communities in poverty in Brazil where their

¹⁷ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970).

discovery of their own agency within contexts of extreme poverty brought about transformation.

Authority

The question of the authority of the three foundations for mission is vital for the process of discerning the nature and location of God's mission in the world. Does human experience carry the capacity to be revelatory of God? While personal revelation is authoritative for the individual it is not necessarily so for the church. Experience can be revelatory and an authoritative expression of the nature of God for the church only when it is interpreted through Scripture as the ultimate authority and Christian tradition as the experience of the church of the past authenticated through the churches.

We can turn to the language and literature of adult education to see a positive use of human experience and a breadth of understanding of the varieties of human experience not always evident in the history of Christian mission. Christian mission and evangelism has not always viewed human experience as a positive contribution to mission. While current trends in evangelism look more to the search for meaning and human wholeness as reasons to adopt the Christian faith previous generations have emphasized the sinfulness of human experience at the expense of God given gifts of creativity and the human experience of the giving or receiving of love. The emphasis on sin is just one aspect of human experience and its emphasis sometimes led to a over-negative anthropology.

Scripture

In considering the role of experience, the Bible has a developmental, change-oriented view of human nature. The Gospels and the Pauline letters have a strong sense of individuals in community and how change and development are the norm for those committed to Christ. For example, the Gospels paint a picture of a community of disciples where the asking of questions and making mistakes are all part of life and opportunities for learning from experience are manifold. The description of Jesus' followers as 'disciples' meaning 'learners' indicates a community where the disciples learn from their master. They are prepared for and sent out in mission (Mt 10:1) and return to the master and report their findings. The disciples even question their master's educational technique by asking, 'Why do you speak to them in parables?' (Mt 13:10). Similarly, Paul urges the Roman church to 'be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.' (Rom 12:2) Transformation of lives concerns being able to discern the will of God and is a continuous process. The object of such transformation is obedience to God and participation in God's mission is at

the heart of such obedience. To the Philippian church Paul says: 'Your task now is to work at bringing about your own salvation' (Phil 2:12).¹⁸ Wright emphasizes that Paul is calling the Philippians to 'Work out for themselves what this business of being saved means in practice.'¹⁹ Again this suggests a process of learning and development and discernment of the will of God that is ongoing and developmental.

Reflection and Learning in *Foundations for Mission*

How Christians talk about mission and how the church understands mission are key areas where the experience of mission is reflected upon and becomes a source of learning. Empirical evidence gleaned from the *Foundations for Mission* research where local interviews with clergy were conducted by Revd Dr Nigel Rooms in the Nottingham area reveals the importance of describing experience in the development of understandings of mission. The sample of thirteen clergy was ecumenical with the majority (eight) being priests in the Anglican church. Taking the three models of mission advocated by Bevans and Schroeder (*missio Dei*, liberation and proclamation),²⁰ these interviews revealed that the majority of those interviewed revealed a preference for a proclamation model of mission with a strong reliance on Matthew 28:18-20 as their Biblical mandate for mission. However, the preference for proclamation was made after stating that their mission thinking and practice combined both the mission of God as well as justice and liberation approaches. What was also evident is that each of those interviewed described their approaches to mission largely in terms of their experience of doing mission in their various contexts. Furthermore, they described their experiences in mission from the perspective of their own agency in what their church did rather than from the perspective of those who received their mission initiatives.

Their articulation of their practice in mission was not systematic but rested heavily on the perceived need to get out into the world and take opportunities that arose. They saw working together with people in their community as the most significant way of doing mission. As one interviewee described, 'finding out what God is doing comes through gathering people and taking opportunities when they are there.'

This raises questions about the gap between the systematic theological mission theology and how that relates to practice and experience. Is the role of mission theology to articulate frameworks that assist the local church in articulating their mission and understanding their role in God's mission? Or is there a more fundamental disjuncture between theology and experience

¹⁸ Tom Wright translation, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters* (London: SPCK, 2002), 104-107.

¹⁹ Wright, *Prison Letters*, 104.

²⁰ *Constants in Context* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), part 3.

because of the processes of reflection on experience or lack of them? Where do theology and experience meet in mission theology? How is mission assessed and practice developed? It is noticeable that the ministers and clergy interviewed described their theology of mission in terms of their experience rather than 'pure' theology.

The problematic nature of mission and justice as highlighted in the case study and the specific themes which emerge from an interrogation of 'experience' in mission lead us to conclude that a reflective practice in mission is needed in order to integrate experience, Bible, Christian theology and tradition.

Building a Reflective Practice for Mission

In a discussion of the relationship between mission and experience arguably the first place to begin a practice based approach to the *missio Dei* is to give a high place to the role of human agency. The *missio Dei* has rightly stressed God's primary movement in mission but questions remain as to the place of human agency. Yet, if humanity is made in the image of God then it is an integral part of the *missio Dei*. Human agency is not just an unfortunate add-on or the weak point in the chain. The church is one of the human agents in mission and its role is described as following God in his mission in the world. The development of a practical theology for the *missio Dei* requires an understanding of what it means to be followers of God who is the initiator in mission. What would be the components of a practice of following God in mission that takes human agency as an integral part of the *missio Dei*?

The first area would be the development of practices of reflection based in prayer, Biblical reflection and the wealth of Christian spirituality and mission history by church communities. Secondly, mission is contextual and embedded in local situations so that listening to the local context is at the heart of this discernment process. This would include a deep listening to the other rooted in sustained encounter. A reflective approach here would emphasize the need for sharing experiences and storytelling as the means for reflecting on experience. This focus on listening to the local context needs to be held together with listening to the global context. An important part of the process of listening is hearing from others outside of the immediate local context. This is where listening to the voice of the outsider can open new insights into the local context. There is a need to recognize the importance of welcoming rather than resisting complexity as part of the world in which God is at work. The examples taken from the relationship between mission and justice show the complexity that is part of mission. Questions concerning the nature of justice in particular contexts need to be

asked.²¹ The diversity of God's mission is also the diversity of human agency and response. Mission can be understood as jazz, where complexity and unity are held together and an original sound is the result.²² The jazz musician is offered a dynamic space in which to improvise according to context and opportunity. The results are often unexpected, beautiful, exciting and inspirational. Mission, like great jazz, can do the same thing.

Mission does not always have to have that name. In other words the church often does mission best when it does not explicitly understand itself as doing mission and can be surprised by the big effects of small efforts. So a reflective practice for mission could include components such as: a process of observation (noticing what is going on around), enquiry (asking questions, reflecting on Scripture and Christian tradition), listening (listening to those outside and beyond the church) and action (putting the fruits of reflection into action). These are the raw materials of the process of discernment that opens up the problematic and disturbing elements of mission experience into the playing of new and unexpected tunes in the divine and human song.



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²¹ Alignments and associations with different community groups are often indicative of the justice agenda of a church community.

²² See Mission Theology Advisory Group, *Presence and Prophecy*, ix.

WHEN MARGINS INFORM AND RE-FORM MISSION: DALIT EXPERIENCES AS A FOUNDATION FOR MISSION THEOLOGY

**Deenabandhu Manchala, Peniel Rajkumar
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Introduction

The Edinburgh 2010 study process demonstrated that the growth and influence of world Christianity makes it incumbent upon mission theology to be attentive to the dynamics of Christian missional practice in particular contexts. This is particularly important in order to understand the multiple dimensions of mission and to re-imagine mission in the light of the varied experiences of mission in different contexts. The basic premise of this chapter is that paying attention to missional practice in particular contexts inevitably entails paying attention not only to how particular communities have experienced mission but also to how particular communities have been engaging with and in mission. It is with this orientation that we embarked upon the 'Mission At and From the Margins' (MAFM) project which sought to understand the reception and the shaping of mission by the Dalit communities in the South Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. Drawing upon this study project, we seek to derive the shape of a mission theology founded on experience by first analysing the importance of paying attention to experience as a foundation for mission theology; and second by deriving reflections on mission in the light of the findings of this 'Mission At and From the Margins' (MAFM) project by reconstructing the mission (hi)story on the basis of the experiences of the margins and thereby point out how experience can serve as a valid and necessary foundation for mission theology.

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The Importance of Paying Attention to Experience in Constructing Mission Theology

That mission, even during the biblical times, has been attentive to experience is too evident to require argument here. In recent times, attentiveness to experience has resulted in mission taking different forms of missional engagement like inter-faith dialogue, liberation and reconciliation – to name a few. However, the rise of contextual theologies have highlighted the importance of paying attention to experience in

(re)formulating theology in general and theologies of mission in particular, especially when there was a tendency to dichotomize the theoretical and the experiential and prioritise the former over the latter. These theologies, while unambiguously acknowledging experience as an indispensable and implicit foundation for all theologies, emphasized the significance of explicitly making experience a central category in the task of theological construction, especially from the point of view of the marginalized communities. Anthony G Reddie's reflections on the significance that black people's tendency to prioritise experience has for the 'democratizing' of theology is particularly illuminating. Reddie argues:

It has often been asserted that many black people have prioritised the experience of God over and above notions of conceptual and cerebral knowledge about God.¹ In this respect, given that the process of gaining direct access to the transformative experience of God is open to all people, this form of knowledge production and epistemology can be seen as a democratization of ultimate truth – the truth of God.²

Reddie's argument for the 'democratic' dimension of experience is pertinent in a context where there is a great deal of skepticism still surrounding theological discourses on mission founded on experience and where the theoretical is emphasized over the experiential. It is in this context that the chapter on 'Foundations for Mission' in the Edinburgh 2010 pre-conference preparatory volume entitled *Witnessing to Christ Today* devoted a section to 'Experiential Foundations for Mission' (alongside Biblical Foundations for Mission and Theological Foundations for Mission) and challenged the power dimension and tacit elitism implicit in mission discourses which emphasized the theoretical over the experiential:

Recognising experience as a foundation for mission fosters a critical engagement with one not-so-obvious aspect of mission thinking, namely the tendency in mission thinking to privilege the so-called theoretical above the empirical. It recognizes the need to accord epistemic value to those practitioners of mission who have been denied the privilege of theorizing due to the politics of power, and whose only resources are their experiences. It is upon these resources also that contemporary thinking has to be founded for mission to maintain ethical integrity and accountability.³

Such a 're-turn' to experience, particularly the experiences of the margins, is needed today in order to construct a fuller picture of the mission story and also to re-image what mission is from the perspectives of the margins. In a context characterized by the overwhelming absence of the

¹ Robert Beckford, *God and the Gangs* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2004) 31-32.

² Anthony G Reddie, *Dramatizing Theologies: A Participative Approach to God-Talk* (London: Equinox, 2006), 188.

³ Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim (eds), *Edinburgh 2010 Volume II – Witnessing to Christ Today* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010), 12.

subaltern, that is those who are considered as being of inferior rank and thus accorded subordinate status, any methodology of deriving foundations for constructing mission theology has to begin with naming the silences in our present discourses on mission and result in a methodological metanoia – a repentance – which is attentive to the perspectives and voices of the margins.

It was such an orientation which set the agenda for the project ‘Mission At and From the Margins: Patterns, Protagonists and Perspectives’. It sought to understand how theologies of mission could be ‘re-sourced’ by paying attention to the experiences of communities at the margins and understanding these communities not as objects of mission but as the subjects of mission. Hence the focus was on ‘Mission AT and FROM the Margins’ rather than ‘Mission TO the Margins’, though it cannot be denied that mission was initially conceived and understood exclusively as the latter and the available mission histories still predominantly subscribe to this uncritically-accepted view.

About the MAFM Project

The study project ‘Mission At and From the Margins: Patterns, Protagonists and Perspectives’ was an empirical research project undertaken in a village called Vegeswarapuram, a village 30 km away from the town of Rajahmundry in the West Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh. It sought to understand the ‘mission story’ from the perspective of the local community’s experiences of mission. The uniqueness of this study project was that it studied the patterns, perspectives and protagonists of mission, both present and past, from the perspective of the ‘margins’ – the margins connoting the marginalized yet resilient Dalit communities, who are considered ‘out castes’ on the basis of the caste system, a unique form of rigid hierarchical social structuring based on notions of purity and pollution.⁴ The church in India today is predominantly comprised of the Dalit communities. This can be attributed, to a great extent, to the positive influence of the Christian missions on Dalit communities in their struggle for identity and emancipation.

The three authors originate from the state of Andhra Pradesh and two of them have been Lutheran priests in the area surrounding the village. Andhra Pradesh offered an exciting terrain for this study as it has witnessed

⁴ The Dalit communities, previously known as the ‘untouchables’, have historically faced and continue to face some of the worst forms of social discrimination, cultural subordination and economic exploitation. In spite of the ongoing atrocities against them, Dalit communities today are increasingly asserting themselves. This assertion manifests itself in naming themselves as Dalits, writing themselves into history, converting to religions which they perceive to be egalitarian, celebrating their religion and culture, reclaiming Dalit rights as human rights and engaging actively in the political processes of the country.

(a) the historical Dalit mass movements of the nineteenth century, (b) the growth of 'mainline' denominational churches and the emergence of several indigenous church and mission movements more recently and, (c) an incipient and inchoate interaction between the church and secular Dalit movements – all crucial factors in understanding the multi-faceted nature of mission. Moreover, being a predominantly Dalit Church the conceptualisation of mission of the churches in Andhra Pradesh has been distinctly centred around the theme of God's engagement in the struggles for Dalit identity, dignity and liberation. In spite of all the richness of resources that churches in Andhra Pradesh had to offer for any research on mission, they had been hitherto unexplored as being of any significance. This study therefore was in some way an attempt to address this lacuna. Further, it may not be an exaggeration to say that the growth of the modern Dalit movement in South India in general and the state of Andhra Pradesh in particular has been facilitated to a great extent by the educational and pastoral ministry of the various missions. These factors provided the impetus for us to focus on the state of Andhra Pradesh.

What Did We Learn from the Study? A Reconstruction of the Mission (Hi)Story

During the course of our study we were able to understand mission as creating *conditions* that facilitated the empowerment of people at the margins. A few specific illustrations drawn from our field study can help us to further understand mission as *the creation of conditions* that facilitated empowerment and emancipation.

Mission as an Alliance

Communities on the margins found in the establishment of the mission station and the presence of the missionary (the *Dora*) an advocate of their rights and used it as a spring board to further their own attempts for emancipation from the caste system. They saw in the *Dora* an ally in their emancipatory efforts, not least because of the access that the missionaries had to the colonial administration. This colonial connection coupled with missionary establishments like hospitals, schools and hostels prompted the Dalit communities to shift their allegiance from their traditional landlords to these new *Doras*. They did so because in this new *Dora*, they found a patron who fanned the flames within for liberation and stood by them in situations of struggle. A popular story which was recounted in various different versions during the course of our field work was the story of a missionary who pointed a gun at the local landlord for abusing a peasant (in some cases abusing a boy defecating in his fields). It was interesting that the story of this *Dora* who pointed a gun at a dominant and abusive landlord was recounted in a recent pamphlet celebrating mission history

which was produced by local Christian leaders. Thus, through weaving these positive images of the missionaries as allies in the struggle against caste-based oppression into their narratives they created new symbolic systems which funded their initiative to move away from their caste-ist feudal landlords and embrace more fully their vision of a new reality of autonomy and self-reliance.

Therefore, the study project helped us to understand the importance of adopting a nuanced approach towards understanding the interplay between colonialism and the Dalit communities because it emerged that Dalit entanglements with missionaries are much more complex than singular patron-client or colonizer-colonized relationships. In fact, Dalit communities, which had no stakes in local power, viewed those in their own country who had power as 'colonizers'. For them, their conversion to Christianity – an experience of which they were the primary agents – helped in their quest for freedom from oppression. In this context the conditions created by mission, most importantly access to education and job opportunities, were seen as liberative-transformative spaces by Dalit communities for self-assertion and reclamation of their place in society than as components of the colonizing process.

Mission and Transformative Education

Much of the transformative effect of Christian mission can be traced to the education ministry of the Christian missions. Creating access to education for the Dalit communities, who were denied education under the caste system, was a strategic intervention which fostered the empowerment of the Dalit communities.

A prominent church leader of Vegeswarapuram, John Victor, mentions that there was a *rotcha banda* (officially, where the village disputes are settled; otherwise, a place of gathering located in the centre of the village usually under the cover of the large canopy of a tree) in the *peta* (the Dalit colony, which is separated from the main village where the caste communities live).⁵ This was their meeting place where they discussed *community issues*. There were about 10-20 of them who used to meet. All of them had completed secondary schooling. These meetings played an important role in facilitating the involvement of the Dalits in social and political issues. Victor remembered the 'two-glass system', (the practice of having separate drinking glasses for Dalits due to the practice of 'untouchability') which was widely prevalent even in the year 1946 when he was a secondary school student and he recounted how they rebelled against this system as Christians and confronted the Kaapus (caste communities). He also mentioned that even as school-going children they rebelled when they were made to sit separately from the caste-Hindu

⁵ Interview with John Victor on 29/06/2009.

children when they started attending the government high schools for their higher secondary classes. According to him, access to education created in them an awareness of justice issues and inspired them to confront oppression effectively. He says, 'The missionaries gave us education and told us, "You have blood, they have blood; it is the same blood". This triggered in us the confidence to challenge injustice whenever we confronted it.'

Mission and the Relocation of Sacred and Secular Spaces

Making strategic topographical changes to the village geographical structure by relocating the sacred and secular places was also an important way in which mission facilitated emancipation, and so can be understood as the 'creation of conditions' for emancipation. Mission as the relocation of geography is a matter of great significance in the Indian context. A typical Indian village is divided into two parts. The main village or the *voor*, which is one part, is inhabited by the caste communities, while the other part, the Dalit *peta* or 'colony', is segregated from the *voor* and is situated at a distance. Fields in between usually segregate the two parts. The village school, the temple, the administrative offices are all situated in the *voor*, thus ascribing social, religious and political importance to the *voor*. Since the village topography is implicated in the social and cultural polity it has a role in sustaining status quo and perpetuating hegemony. Thus village topography and any changes within need to be understood politically.

In this light one can understand the relocation of the sacred and secular geography of Vegeswarapuram as having a liberative missiological dimension. In our field study at Vegeswarapuram, we were told that initially the Dalit colony was more than a kilometre away from the 'voor' (or the part of the village inhabited by caste communities). Mission work saw the relocating of this space by bringing the Dalit colony nearer to the *voor* that today it is only a road which separates the two. The demarcation is not very distinctive for the untrained eye to observe. From our interviews it emerged that this relocation is a matter of great pride and assertion as it upsets the traditional geography of the village and the socio-economic and cultural relationship between the various caste and Dalit communities. Further by constructing a church building in the Dalit colony, the colony could no longer be regarded as 'polluted' and possessing no space for the divine. Symbolically for the Dalit communities having such a significant landmark as the church in 'their' locality, was not only a re-location of the divine, it was also a source of collective affirmation of identity, which also gave them an opportunity to play host to the other caste Christians by welcoming them to their 'colony'.

The Polysemic Relationship between Mission and Social Justice

Although the popular understandings of *church-centred* mission which emerged in most of our interviews and meetings with focus groups were proclamation (seen in terms of numerical growth) and pastoral care, along with this social justice and resistance to casteism were recognised as *God's mission given to all people*. There seems to be a polysemic (multi-layered) dimension in the understanding of the people when it comes to spirituality and activism. In our interviews it became clear that the church and the pastor are seen as facilitators more of pastoral care, than social change, though this may be a crude distinction.

Interestingly Dalit Christian leaders of the village expressed discomfort in using the premises of the church for talking about social justice, though they discussed issues of social justice in the Dalit colony and were actively involved in issues of social justice, *which they affirmed as God's work*. One reason for this was the community's preparedness to take up force as a means of self-defence to resist the caste-based violence against them. For them violence and Christianity were incompatible. Yet, adopting forceful means of resistance and threatening to take up violence if violated were inevitable as a powerful deterrent to caste-based atrocities against them. This was evident in the example of Rev David Nelson Babu, one of the previous pastors of Vegeswarapuram. In the narration of his experiences as a pastor at Vegeswarapuram he begins by recalling the incident of an atrocity against a Dalit Sub-Inspector of Police. When the Sub-Inspector was killed because of caste animosity, Rev Babu organized a protest and brought the two main Dalit sub-castes *Malas* and *Madigas* together, who made it clear that they would resort to violent means if attacked. According to Rev Babu it proved to be a powerful deterrent which prevented further atrocities against the Dalits. Hence, proclamation, pastoral care and social justice are all recognized as part of the mission of God. The agency for this mission extended beyond the church.

In the course of our interaction with the Dalit Christian youth, we recognised a transition. These youth did not really consider the church to be an agent of justice and liberation and neither did they see justice and liberation as being 'mission'. The word used by them for acts of justice and liberation is '*seva*' or service. In course of our research we were able to realise that this is indicative of a paradigmatic shift in the identity of the church. We were able to recognise the effects of the transition of the church in Andhra Pradesh today *from being a mission to becoming a church* comprising of several denominations which evolved as a result of a significant numerical growth of believers. Of the several paradigmatic shifts that have shaped this transition, the most significant is that the church no longer continues to be the only space through which the Dalit communities could realise their aspirations for emancipation as was most often the case earlier. In the context of post-independent India the state also began to assume responsibility for the education of the Dalit communities

because of the safe-guards provided by the constitution framed under the leadership of Dr BR Ambedkar an iconic Dalit leader. In such a context the Dalit communities in Andhra Pradesh found a 'post-Christian' secular space (the constitutionally accorded educational and employment opportunities) to carry on their struggles for emancipation, with a distinctively socio-economic focus. Further, the rise of the Ambedkarite Movement which found its expression through the formation of Dalit student associations, Dalit employees associations, Dalit agricultural labour and trade unions and political parties also emerged as another alternative space to articulate the Dalit quest for emancipation, with a pronouncedly political focus. In such a context characterised by the emergence/presence of several other agencies of emancipation, we comprehended that the understanding of the mission of the church was being re-shaped by the implications of this interface between the church, the state and the Ambedkarite movements. We were convinced that understanding the changing nature of mission in Andhra Pradesh cannot bypass an exploration of the dialectical tensions within this interface.

The Natives as the Protagonists of Mission

This study project also helped us to recover the role of Dalits as the agents of Christian mission, which is an often-overlooked fact. One specific question that the study project 'Mission At and From the Margins' sought to address was: Was mission something that happened because of a prime mover from the outside or did the movement burst from within?

In an annual gathering of missionaries in Hyderabad around the year 1857, a missionary rose to state the slogan 'To the banks of the Godavery'.⁶ This was a rallying cry to fellow missionaries to pursue the geographical spread of Christianity to places like Vegeswarapuram, which are situated on the banks of the river Godavery, one of the largest South Indian rivers which flows through Andhra Pradesh into the Bay of Bengal. This slogan reveals what the popular understanding of mission was, an understanding that is reflected widely even today; that is that the central role in mission was played by the missionary. This was a standard and accepted model of mission. Let us consider one such 'standard model' for instance described by J Berquist and P Manickan in talking about Protestant mission in pre-Independence India:

At the centre, the absolute kingpin of the whole structure, stood the missionary.... Next of importance was a second circle made of ordained national pastors.... A third concentric circle was represented by another line of professional and paid ministers, the unordained evangelists and Bible women.... The fourth circle, in ever-widening distance from the centre, was

⁶ F. Colyer Sackett, *Vision and Venture: A Record of Fifty Years in Hyderabad 1879-1929* (London: The Cargate Press, 1930).

the church school teacher.... Finally, on the periphery, were the unpaid voluntary lay workers – elders, prayer conductors, lay preachers.⁷

This statement reflects the popular understanding of mission which prevails about the protagonists of mission. The missionary is understood as the ‘absolute kingpin’ who makes up the ‘centre’. In contrast the fourth circle which is described as being at an ‘ever-widening distance from the centre’ consists of the church school teachers, and the fifth circle described as the ‘periphery’ consists of elders, prayer conductors and lay preachers. In this ‘standard model’, the places ascribed to different groups of people involved in mission shows their relative importance too. This is what the ‘Mission At and From the Margins’ project enabled us to call into question.

Though the ‘standard model’ is true while talking about power, the agency of these groups almost takes a reverse order from a ‘margins’ perspective. Regarding the agency for mission it became clear that in the past overseas missionaries with their position of power played the role of primary agents of mission. However, though the mission stations were established by the foreign missionaries the actual proclamation of the Christ story, establishment of the congregation and the nurturing of the faith community were carried through by the native catechist/teachers and pastors. For example, the native catechist-teacher as the name indicates had a dual role which focused both on nurturing the faith community and in ensuring educational opportunities to as many children as possible and even initiating the efforts of the community in building a church in the *peta* (the Dalit colony). They did this with a great enthusiasm because it meant to them a promise of restoration of their sense of self-worth and a greater sense of meaning in their own lives. Hence, we can speak of the local Dalits as being the agents of mission and not merely the objects of mission.

What is significant about the agency of the Dalits is that they appropriated the *conditions of mission* set up by the missionaries like education, indiscriminate access to schools, hospitals, hostels and ‘holy spaces’ like the church, which had symbolic value, to navigate their quest for equality, enhance their self-dignity and social status and further the mission of proclamation and pastoral care. Dalit communities had their own way of dealing with caste hegemony which was not one of passive acceptance of the system that kept them at the margins. In the realm of culture and religion they exercised their agency through conversion and it is in this realm their aspirations for liberation found symbolic expression. Hence we see that the native communities were not passive, but, on the contrary were active in appropriating the conditions of mission to navigate their own quest for liberation as the following stories of certain protagonists of mission at Vegeswarapuram reveal.

⁷ Paul D. Wiebe, *Christians in Andhra Pradesh: The Mennonites of Mahbubnagar* (Madras: CISRS/CLS, 1988), 155.

An interview with Rev Absalom, a prominent retired Madiga pastor revealed that the missionaries selected local leaders who were often prominent in the village.⁸ For instance, he said that Peddam Jeevarathnam, one such local leader, is known by everyone in Vegeswarapuram. The missionaries provided such local leaders with the conditions of education and opportunity, and ‘took their help for both evangelism and administration’. The story of Absalom’s own ‘father’⁹ Undadu (who later became Abraham and found a church in his village) is illustrative of how mission was used as a *condition* for liberation. Undadu was a leader of the community who went around to different villages to settle disputes amongst his own people (Madigas). It was his association with *maladasarulu*¹⁰ and the *Mastins* (wandering bards who went around telling the stories of the community) that initially prompted in him religiosity which found greater expression when he became a Christian. Though he never had a formal education, he learnt to write and read through his association with these communities. When the mission arrived, he found a greater and a more organized opportunity for his community to realize their aspirations. From this initial impetus and his own interest, he moved on to reading the Bible and even preaching. Abraham, we were told, was a good community leader and used to settle disputes even in surrounding villages. Most importantly, he was responsible for the conversion of the *peta*. Rev Absalom also recalled that during the centenary celebrations of the AELC, they built churches as part of the celebration, and his father and those he motivated carried bricks and built the church. Here we see that the role played by Abraham was one who was proactive and took initiative.

Another such protagonist is Absalom himself. Absalom went to Darpagudam, a village in West Godavari District as a teacher. He was 21 years old then and the place was an ‘agency area’ – an area where Dalit consciousness was strong. People were not educated there. After Absalom went there, he gathered the children every night and used to play with them and teach them. He eventually became a leader and used to settle disputes. At that time there were conflicts between two dominant Dalit sub-caste groups, the Malas and the Madigas, and he used to be an agent of reconciliation. Once, Absalom organised a boycott and the people refused to work on the lands of the *kaapus* the landlords from a local caste community. In a context where it was the practice for the dominant to enforce restrictions on employment, this was a revolutionary event.

⁸ Interview with Rev Absalom on 1/7/2009 at Rajahmundry.

⁹ Absalom’s biological father was David. However, living in a joint family system, they lived as one family and since Abraham was the eldest of the three brothers, he was called ‘father’.

¹⁰ Maladasaralu were the traditional teachers of the Mala (dalit) community, who passed on traditional knowledge about the community from generation to generation.

Significantly, Absalom said that his strategy was to work behind the scenes, and not gather too much 'public attention'. When we privilege these events, stories and experiences and consider such perspectives, we see that Dalits are not mere objects of mission. Here we see the picture of a person with initiative, taking proactive steps, self-motivated and motivating, organizing and enforcing.

However, interestingly when asked how the mission recruited him, Absalom emphasised 'I came by myself'. In this case, the mission did not choose him; rather he chose the mission. This revelation has to be considered alongside the fact that the Dalit communities were not the 'primary target' group of the missionaries initially when they began their mission. The primary target group of the missionaries, who believed in the 'trickle-down effect',¹¹ were usually the caste communities, who were at the centre of the social order. Thus we see that, largely, mission was *taken to the margins* only as a kind of afterthought, after being rejected, as it were, at the centre. However, we see that in course of time this mission *To the margins* became a mission *At and From the margins* because the Dalit communities embraced this mission and made it their own. We see the realization of this in some missionary writings. For instance:

After the first strenuous years there came a period which was long to continue, when inquirers and converts sprang up *everywhere*. They were, if you will, *self-sown*. One told another... *It grows of itself*, and gathers strength in growing'.¹²

Pickett writes that 'the features most common to the beginnings of the movements in different areas are that *missionaries and ministers of the church did not seek them*....'¹³ In this sense, Pickett places the protagonist of the mission as being the native rather than the missionary. He says that the real founder of the church in Travancore was Vedamanickam, a Sambavar (Dalit) convert; in Kistna it was Venkayya, a 'robber chief'; in Sialkot, it was Ditt, a Chuhra (Dalit) convert.¹⁴ Hence these persons used mission as a condition to exercise their agency and find the means to achieve their quest for freedom and dignity, and it was their missionary effort that paved way for the 'success' of Christian mission. Retrieving such stories from the memory of the community, we see that the Dalit communities played the role of the protagonists of mission and change.

The research made it clear that though the establishment of the missions provided the condition for social change, the native evangelists, catechists and the masses were the protagonists of the story of the mission of the

¹¹ There were of course a handful who started at the margins even in the very beginning. This is not to be discounted. For example, the Mennonite mission in Mahbubnagar district of Andhra Pradesh.

¹² Sackett, *Vision and Venture*, 67, emphasis ours.

¹³ J Waskom Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India: A Study With Recommendations* (Cincinnati: The Abingdon Press, 1933), 56, emphasis ours.

¹⁴ Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements*, 56.

church among the Dalits. As the missionaries encountered these communities, sometimes they were challenged to review and rearticulate their understanding of mission. Sometimes the interactions called for a conversion on the side of the missionary. These communities actively participated in the proclamation and practice of the gospel, imagined creative modes of carrying the mission through and set the agenda of the mission. In this process the missionaries, the native evangelists and the masses had to come to terms with the position of the power of the missionary and the position of powerlessness of the masses. In the interaction of these two positions (of power and powerlessness), the Dalit communities creatively navigated their quest for the reclamation of identity, self-worth and rights.

Perspectives of Mission

Foregrounded in these experiences one can understand mission as involving a midwifery role – a role which involves both *creating* those conditions which give birth to new realities which people yearn for as well as *eliminating* the various impediments which impose constraints on the flourishing of the communities on the margins. Understanding mission as having a midwifery role in a pluralistic context like India has significant implications because primarily mission does not become the monopoly of ecclesiastical Christianity. Mission transcends being an enterprise which can solely be in the service of the church. Rather, understanding mission as creating the conditions for liberation helps us to understand mission as a process which offers itself to further the liberative agendas of other organisations, groups and bodies which may have their base outside the church but yet are involved in the issues of justice. It becomes a catalyst in forging alliances. The Dalit movement in India has gained momentum to a large extent because of a culture of reciprocity of support. Dalit theology, Dalit literary and social activism and the various Dalit movements have drawn impetus for their work and have grown in confidence and in their persistence in this culture of convergence and mutuality. Therefore, mission as the creation of conditions needed for liberation helps us to understand mission as hospitality – where the fruits of missional activity are offered to others in the service of their agendas in so far as they serve liberative purposes and where other groups and forces are invited to partake in what has been achieved and give it further shape and direction.

In this essay we have intentionally chosen to understand mission from the perspective of the Dalit communities and in solidarity with communities on the margins. In our view such solidarity with communities whose voices have been elided and whose (hi)stories have been undermined has an element of justice because it involves, to use a phrase from liberation theology, making a preferential option. As Joerg Reiger

reminds us there is a need for justice to be configured as preference in a context of discrimination and asymmetries. This is because:

(t)his notion of justice, understood as ‘being in solidarity with those who experience injustice,’ and as ‘taking the sides of those who have been marginalized and excluded from relationship,’ is required to produce true opposition to the injustices of the status quo. This notion of justice is more radical than mere rejections of the status quo’s notions of justice as fairness because it leads to unexpected reversals, implying not only attention to needs but closer attention to those pressured by injustice, and *reminds us of alternative sorts of agency and energy that are often overlooked*.¹⁵

The Mission At and From the Margins Project sought to redress the injustices of the status quo of prevailing mission discourses by reconstructing a particular mission (hi)story by being in solidarity with the marginalised Dalit communities. In our view this process has in fact reminded us about the ‘alternative sorts of agency and energy’ that prevail among the margins, that are often ignored. We have been enlightened about the ‘productivity’ of the margins and have been lead, ‘to a new awareness and valuation of the productivity of the margins’, which ‘might lead also to a new awareness of God’s own mysterious productivity in places where we least expect it, even on a cross.’¹⁶

Therefore, the cross of Christ is both an expression of God’s solidarity with the suffering ones as well as a sign of the productivity of the margins. It is God’s participation with the suffering ones, even to a point of death, and resurrection with them to a new life and new future. This notion of God’s mission in the world suggests to us where we might find the locations of God’s engagement: God is at the margins, engaging in the lives of those who are at the margins and offering horizons of hope. If Christian faith is a faith in such God, the church’s mission is to be understood not in a paternalistic language of ‘mission to’ but as mission at, with and from. It is from there, God calls us to join God’s mission with the people at the margins and offers to the world a prophetic vision of new earth and new heaven. In this sense we can say that the church’s mission begins with a return towards the margins (repentance) and finds its meaning in its solidarity with the margins (discipleship) and derives its purpose from a radically re-imagined future of the restoration and emancipation of the entire created creation (hope).

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¹⁵ Joerg Rieger, ‘“That’s Not Fair”: Upside-Down Justice in the Midst of the Empire’, in Rosemary Radford Ruether and Marion Grau (eds), *Interpreting the Postmodern: Responses to ‘Radical Orthodoxy’* (New York/London: T & T Clark, 2006) (91-106), 100. Emphasis is ours.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 101.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORICAL INQUIRY IN MISSION

Beverly Eileen Mitchell

Introduction

As a systematic theologian, who teaches the history of (Western) Christianity in a United Methodist seminary in the United States, I am often thrust into the role of apologist for the importance of learning history. Students who have unpleasant memories of studying this subject are uninformed about the value of history as they prepare for ministry. They sometimes approach the required church history courses as if they are being forced to ingest a foul-tasting medicine. For them learning history is something that must be endured on the path toward acquiring the proper credentials for pastoral ministry. Initially, the relevance of historical inquiry for pastoral ministry is hidden from their eyes. This is particularly true for African Americans who too often have failed to see themselves represented in the telling of any aspect of America's story. If they want to know anything about their history they must study it on their own. If it is incorporated in mainstream curricula far too much is left out. Whether the topic is 'secular' history or 'religious history,' there is a tendency to approach our story as ancillary to 'real *American* history'. I sympathize with the concern of my African American students, for much of what I have learned about African American history, in general, and African American religious history, in particular, has come through my own personal reading and study.

Invariably, however, after the end of a 14-week semester, black and white students will confess to me individually that they 'learned a lot' or they express excitement about 'how the pieces now fit together' as a result of their journey of discovering the origins of their own denominational affiliations. One or two students a semester even acquire a newfound interest in history – something they could never have imagined prior to taking one of my history courses. This positive outcome is primarily due to the fact that such students have come to realize the importance of historical inquiry not only for their knowledge of the role of the church in history, but also because their own identities as Christians have been *re-formed* through the discipline of studying their own religious traditions.

It seems to me that it is impossible to engage effectively in any discipline without *some* background or foundational knowledge of the history of that discipline. In the task of Christian mission it is downright

dangerous to do so. Here, the often quoted aphorism of the Spanish philosopher George Santayana is worth repeating: ‘Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.’ This pearl of wisdom certainly has some applicability for considering the question of the importance of historical inquiry as a foundational element for mission. However, as an African American student of American history, *and* as a teacher of African American religious history, I find even more apt what the religious philosopher Cornel West had to say about the importance of history. Some years ago he made the observation that African Americans have not had the luxury of forgetting history, as other Americans have done, for African Americans have been the Americans ‘who could not not know’.¹ West’s observation is a word to the wise within the African-American community, but it is just as valid for people of other communities who have been forced to occupy a place on the margins of a society or a nation. People who have been marginalized cannot afford to take a position of voluntary ignorance with regard to not only their own story, but also the ‘history’ which is promulgated by dominant communities as ‘*the* history.’ This is true whether we are speaking of secular or religious communal narratives. This insight is no less true for making sense of Christian mission within particular contexts.

I believe that there are three major elements which reflect the importance of historical inquiry in mission. Critical historical inquiry informs, reforms, and transforms. I maintain that the task of historical inquiry must be critical. I would not say that this approach is necessarily governed by a ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’. A posture of automatic suspicion can be just as unreflective as the posture which naively assumes that traditional historical renderings are completely ‘objective’ narratives of the events of the past. Rather, the critical approach I propose requires open-mindedness, a propensity to ask hard questions, and a willingness to revise previous notions according to what the evidence dictates. Historical inquiry in Christian mission in the broad sense – not just evangelizing to ‘save souls’, but the holistic sense that includes the promotion of justice in the economic, social, and political realms – is indispensable. This is true because such inquiry involves not just the accumulation of a body of knowledge, but more importantly, this knowledge has the power to inform, reform, and transform those who pursue it.

¹ Robert O’Meally and Genevieve Fabre report this in the introduction to *History and Memory in African-American Culture* (London: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3. They indicate that West reportedly said this at a lecture at Wesleyan University in May 1988. In their footnote they also reference Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act* (New York: Random House, 1964), 124.

Historical Inquiry Informs

A question that surfaces with regard to African American religious history is that black slaves adopted the 'white man's religion'. As late as the mid-1930s, African American religious figure Howard Thurman was challenged in India by the question of why he adopted the religion of his oppressor. The question stunned him to such a degree that he spent several years investigating the question of whether Christianity had anything of value to say to the oppressed. His reflection on this question led to the writing of one of his most famous books, *Jesus and the Disinherited*.² For Thurman, the Indian's blunt question was not one he could easily dismiss, nor can any African American who has grappled with the existential conflict of the reality of slavery in a nation built upon Judeo-Christian principles and buttressed by the zeal for political liberty. Part of what has helped thoughtful African Americans work through this question is the careful attention African American historians have given to the study of early African American Christianity. The study of African American religion begins with the study of the context in which African Americans encountered Christianity in the United States.

That context, in a very brief summary, is as follows. Blacks were enslaved by force, sometimes even with the help of fellow Africans. Slavery was not only the economic backbone of the economy of the Southern United States, but the economy of the North was tied to the Southern slave economy as well. Slavery in North America was purposely designed to dehumanize and degrade blacks. When enslavement of the indigenous population was unsuccessful, the importation of Africans for enslavement increased. Viewed as less than human, and variously depicted as 'lazy', 'ignorant', 'uncivilized', 'savages', both 'childlike' and 'menacing,' blacks were soon consigned to an hereditary form of servitude, with the promulgation of the view that they were uniquely suited for that status. Subsequently, racial theories were developed to justify 'scientifically' the continued enslavement of blacks. Although the inconvenient truth is that blacks and indigenous people also owned slaves, nevertheless, white supremacy, a staple of both the North and the South, served as the prevailing ideology that governed the slave trade and sustained the institution of slavery until the end of the Civil War.

Those who engaged in the practice of slavery in North America sought to deny blacks their full humanity as well as their sense of self-identity by attempting to erase from conscious memory all cultural elements from their African past. It is within this context that we must consider mission to African slaves in North America. A critical historical examination renders this mission problematical. For within the attempt to erase all traces of their

² Thurman discusses the conflict wrought by his encounter with the Indian in his autobiography *With Head and Heart* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1979), 113-14.

former cultural identities, there was also the attempt to supply a new one: a servile identity forged through a distortion of the gospel message and a misread of selected biblical texts. The intention was to seal their subordinate status through a form of evangelization that amounted to indoctrination into the lie that slavery was God's will for them as a cursed people and that their task in life was to be 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'.³

Critical historical inquiry reveals other problematic dimensions of mission to the slaves. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), a missionary organisation within the Church of England, sought to *ameliorate* the injurious effects of colonization on the indigenous people and the misery of slavery on African slaves.⁴ The SPG did not seek the abolition of slavery or the rescue of the indigenous from the abrogation of their land and their annihilation. Even so, this organization's desire to evangelize was met with resistance from the planter class on several grounds. They questioned the slaves' humanness – hence, the efficacy of evangelization. Because of the language barrier and cultural differences which were perceived as deficiencies, they questioned their intelligence to understand catechetical instruction. Catechetical instruction was time-consuming and thus a threat to productivity on the plantations. They feared that evangelization would require that the slaves be emancipated, because this was a legal requirement in Britain. They instinctively feared that the gospel's liberating elements would disturb the master-slave relational dynamic. Cleverly, the objections of the planter class were overcome with the assurance that evangelizing the slaves would make them better, more productive, docile slaves with the use of biblical texts which seemed to support slavery.⁵

Although aspects of mission to black slaves remain problematic, historical inquiry into African American Christianity has helped to reshape the self-understanding of the Black church – an appellation which not only covers historical black denominations, such as the African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, and Coloured Methodist

³ This is a reference to the common racist myth that Africans are descendents of Ham, whose son Canaan was cursed by Noah in Genesis 9:25. 'Hewers of wood and drawers of water' are slaves. A cross reference to this notion of slavery as a divine curse is paralleled in Deuteronomy 29:11 and Joshua 9:21.

⁴ John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom A History of Negro Americans* (5th ed, New York: Alfred Knopf, 1980), 59.

⁵ The SPG was unsuccessful in evangelizing huge numbers of black slaves. The mass conversion of blacks did not occur until the fires of revival spread through the Second Great Awakening in the latter decade of the eighteenth century and into the early decades of the nineteenth century. See 'Catechesis and Conversion,' in Albert J Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The 'Invisible Institution' in the Antebellum South*, London: Oxford University Press, 1978), 95-150.

Episcopal⁶ churches, but also the predominantly black congregations that affiliate with various historically white denominations, including Baptists, United Methodists, Holiness, and Pentecostals. Our styles of worship, which have tended to include a particularized rhetorical style of preaching; spiritual songs and spontaneous congregational singing; ecstatic expression, and dramatic interpretation of biblical texts which speak of divine deliverance, have led to investigations regarding the extent to which African-American Christianity reflects African influences despite the attempt at cultural annihilation.⁷ Moreover, in important ways historical inquiry has helped African American Christians answer the question as to whether black slaves understood Christianity as the 'religion of the white man'. Historical inquiry has determined that the slaves did not simply adopt the 'religion of the oppression', but that they made Christianity their own.

Another critical way in which historical inquiry has informed us is that we have come to see the transformative force of a gospel that denied that we were accursed children of Ham, but rather children of the living God. Although slaveholders preached a gospel of sanctioned enslavement, the slaves *internalized* the Christian gospel message of liberation, which restored their sense of dignity and worth as human beings made in the image of God, whom Christ died to redeem.⁸ By historical inquiry we have come to realize that Christian black abolitionists helped African Americans to see themselves not as the slave-owners attempted to define them but as God saw them. Critical historical inquiry has also enabled us discern the strong empowering role Christianity played in helping black abolitionist resist slavery and fight for the recognition of human dignity, as a critical part of Christian mission.⁹

We have come to realize that Christianity played a dual function in the black community. It did prove to be a 'balm in Gilead', (not an opiate), to a people who were badly bruised and abused by the slave system, by

⁶ The Coloured Methodist Episcopal Church changed its name to Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in 1954.

⁷ Charles Long notes well the historical debate between those of E Franklin Frazer and WEB DuBois who maintain the absence of significant persistent elements of Africanism in America and that of Melville Herskovitz, who changed his position and placed a greater emphasis on the persistence of African elements among the descents of the slaves in North America. See Charles H Long, 'Perspectives for a Study of African-American Religion in the United States,' in Timothy E Fulop and Albert Raboteau, *African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture* (New York & London: Routledge, 1997), 25-7.

⁸ A couple of volumes are helpful in articulating this. For example, see Albert Raboteau, *Slave Religion* and Timothy Fulop & Albert Raboteau, *African American Religion*.

⁹ I address at length the view that such abolitionist figures as David Walker, James Pennington, Henry Highland Garnet, and Samuel Ringgold Ward held that abolitionist was an integral part of Christian mission. See *Black Abolitionism: A Quest for Human Dignity* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2005).

sustaining them through the faith knowledge that God did not condone their enslavement, and that their identities were far more significant than that of slaves, and that justice would prevail. However, Christianity also stirred a fire in the belly of free black men and women, fugitives from slavery, and even the slaves themselves to rise up in rebellion to a morally unjust system. Sojourner Truth proclaimed a gospel that challenged her white audience to see her as a Black *woman* who was capable of doing what a man could do. Harriet Tubman, sometimes referred to as the Black Moses, worked tirelessly to help slaves secure their freedom through her leadership in the Underground Railroad. David Walker's *Appeal* was a motivating factor in the growth of a militant strain of the abolitionist movement from the 1830s onward. Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey (a Methodist), and Nat Turner (a Baptist), motivated by their reflection on Scriptures which revealed God as a Liberator, lead revolts in 1800, 1825, and 1831, respectively, with the intention of bringing slavery in the United States to an end. We know now through historical inquiry that Christianity was both a salve of comfort and a potion for radical resistance. The work of historians has been invaluable in helping students of history understand not only the emergence of African American Christianity within the context of slavery, but also the ways in which this particular expression of Christianity shaped American religion well into the twentieth century.

Historical Inquiry Reforms

A well-known notion from study of the Protestant reformation of sixteenth century reformers is that of *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* (the church reformed always reforming). The Protestant reformers understood that because of our imperfection as a faith community, the church would always stand in need of reform. This must be a motto of mission theology and practice, too. As Robert O'Meally and Genevieve Fabre assert, '...[T]he modern historian [knows] that history is not so much a fixed, objective rendering of 'the facts' as it is a process of constant rethinking and reworking in a world of chance and change.'¹⁰ This observation of O'Meally and Fabre is true despite political factions in the United States that label as 'revisionist' anything that deviates from the 'party line' of traditional interpretations of historical events from Western European and North American (white male) authors. Constant repentance is necessary in faithful Christian discipleship, whether we speak of individual Christians or their communities of faith. Certain practices in mission activity in the nineteenth century bear out the importance of critical historical inquiry from within.

Through his experience of the process of evangelization, John L. Nevius devised an approach to evangelization that was effective in leading to

¹⁰ See Fabre and O'Meally, *History and Memory in African-American Culture*, 3.

conversions and successful church planting in Korea. In general Asia was a difficult region to evangelize. Although there were many reasons for the Asian resistance to earlier evangelistic efforts of Catholics and Protestants, in the 'Great Century' of global missionary efforts, close ties to colonialism was a major one obstacle. The Nevius Plan was a step in the direction of counteracting the deleterious effects of previous evangelistic efforts in Asia and elsewhere. The following elements comprised the Nevius Plan:

1. Each Christian should 'abide in the calling wherein he was found'. Indigenous converts who evangelized were to be supported by their own work; and remain as a witness for Christ in their own neighborhood. This emphasized the value of lay members; they could carry out their call to ministry in their own context.

2. Church methods and structures were only to be developed insofar as the Korean churches were able to take responsibility for it. The Koreans were recognized as capable of exercising leadership over their own churches.

3. The Korean church would choose its own leaders and full time workers. Korean church members would determine those who were best qualified for full-time service and whom they would support.

4. The churches would be built in the indigenous style, by the Koreans, with their own resources. This was an attempt to demonstrate respect for the indigenous context and to encourage self-support among the Koreans.

5. Responsibility for the ministry would be placed upon lay persons. This precluded the loss of their skills as craftsmen and business entrepreneurs within their own communities.

These practices measures were accompanied by the encouragement of Bible study and rigorous stewardship in combination with voluntary service.¹¹

A similar strategy of mission can be found in the approaches of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson, two prominent missionary theoreticians and strategists of the nineteenth century, who served as executive officers of two of the largest mission agencies. Venn, General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society in London, influence mission work in Great Britain. Anderson, Foreign Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, influenced mission work in the United States. Venn and Anderson arrived independently at the same basic principles of missions and mutually influenced each other. They formulated the 'Three-Self' Formula, which governed the rise of British and American missions from the middle of the nineteenth century until World War II. The goal of

¹¹ Stephen Neill and Owen Chadwick (ed), *A History of Christian Missions* (2nd ed, London: Penguin, 1990), 290.

missions was to plant and foster development of churches to be self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating.¹²

The methods devised by Nevius, Venn, and Anderson were undoubtedly developed by an historical inquiry that determined what methods of mission and practice were effective in nurturing strong disciples who could carry on mission within their own contexts without the interference of patronizing or paternalistic foreign entities. Unfortunately, even tragically, despite their methodologies, nineteenth century missionaries succumbed to the 'colonial' complex, which had a foundational assumption of the innate inferiority of other races and cultures. This encouraged the belief of the necessity to expand Western civilization to peoples of other lands. Christianity and its ideals were inseparably wedded to the growth of European civilization. Some historians, such as Stephen Neill, have argued that colonialism – in some ways – was a blessing in disguise because it terminated intertribal warfare; ended the slave trade (the slave trade and intertribal warfare were decimating populations in Africa); and was the source for land grants for schools and mission stations because colonial governments favored missionary work.

The famous missionary to Africa, David Livingstone, took the tact of extolling the virtue of the tie between 'commerce and Christianity' when he raised the question, 'Can the love of Christ not carry the missionary where the slave trade carries the trader?' In his famous lecture at Cambridge on December 4, 1857, he implored:

... I beg to direct your attention to Africa. I know that in a few years I shall be cut off in that country, which is now open. Do not let it be shut again! I go back to Africa to try to make an open path for commerce and Christianity. Do you carry on the work which I have begun. I leave it to you.¹³

This alliance between commerce and Christianity would be much debated. Interpreters such as Neill have indicated that Livingstone felt that if Africans could engage in legitimate commerce, exchanging products of their own fields and forests for desirable things which the white man could supply, then slavery could be brought to an end. It is a matter of debate as to whether this interpretation is an accurate portrayal of Livingstone's intentions.¹⁴ The more salient issue is how Africans themselves experienced the coming of Western commerce.

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¹² R. Pierce Beaver, 'The History of Mission Strategy', in Ralph D Winter and Steven C Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (4th ed, William Carey Library Publishers, 2009), 228-38.

¹³ William Monk, ed. Dr. Livingstone's Cambridge Lecture (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell and Co., 1860), 22.

¹⁴ Stephen Neill and Owen Chadwick, *A History of Christian Missions*, 265-267. Fidelis Nkomazana wrote a persuasive article suggesting that Livingstone has often been misunderstood as a conscious promoter of European colonization of Africa. See 'Livingstone's Ideas of Christianity, Commerce, and Civilization,' in Pula: *Bostwana Journal of African Studies*, 1,2:12, 1998. <http://archive.lib.msu.edu/>

The voices of historically marginalized communities have helped to articulate the painful legacy of colonization, slavery, and its later iterations in ways which have forced the fields of mission and evangelization to reevaluate their theology and practice. Through historical inquiry of the received traditions regarding missionary activity, which tended to come from the missionaries and traders themselves, rather than the recipients of those endeavours, we have been led to assess Christian mission in the immediate past as a mixed legacy. We recognize and concede that missionaries often approached people of other cultures with a superiority complex, which viewed Christianity and Western civilization as one. In failing to distinguish between the liberating gospel and their own cultural prejudices, they failed to understand that the gospel is neither preached nor received apart from social contexts and that the encounter of the gospel in one cultural context will look distinct from another. They failed to recognize that too often they made negative assessments of traditional religions out of ignorance, rejecting the validity of them out of hand. Through the insights brought to light by critical historical inquiry, these past mistakes of mission theology and practice have been acknowledged and theorists and practitioners speak with more understanding now of the concept of contextualization in Christian mission.

However, critical historical inquiry requires a fuller assessment of Christian mission. This includes the acknowledgement that there were positive achievements within mission from which many have benefited. There were missionaries who were able to overcome their ethnocentric tendencies and who did develop an appreciation for indigenous cultures. There were missionaries who did not adopt a paternalistic attitude toward those they came to evangelize. They provided education for boys *and* girls. They built hospitals and clinics that provided medical care that would not have been obtained otherwise. There were occasions in which they contributed toward the reform of cultural practices, such as foot-binding, widow-burning, and the killing of twins. Participation in reforms reflects concrete ways in which some missionaries engaged in a holistic liberating mission for those adversely affected by oppressive cultural practices.

Nevertheless, we must all concede that the legacy of mission is ambiguous at best. As expressions of Christianity in Africa, Asia, and Latin America remain vital, and theologians and mission practitioners from these areas continue to make contributions to the study of theology, church history, evangelism and missions, historical work will have to be reformed. This will not mean discarding everything written in the past, but the reform of historical work will mean critical assessment that will ultimately enhance what is known about the interplay between religion, politics, culture and the ways in which that interplay impacted all the players in the

unfolding of Christian history in various contexts. This re-forming is less likely to be done, however, unless those from these global regions and the Diaspora of these respective regions assume the challenge of doing the hard and sometimes tedious work of historical inquiry.

Historical Inquiry Transforms

An important way of understanding the nature of Christian discipleship and mission is to recognize that we are always in a state of becoming. We are pilgrims on the way. The goal of Christian discipleship, whether we think in terms of individuals or communities of faith, is that of conforming to the image of Christ. In Rom 12:1, the Apostle Paul exhorts us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We are saved in order to become something else. We are destined for a transformation that benefits not only ourselves but all of those we encounter. Saving knowledge of what God has done for humankind in Christ is intended to lead to transformation.

In *The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx, alarmed by the economic status quo he witnessed as he saw the effects of early industrialization on the poor in Europe, argued that the purpose of the study of philosophy was to change things. I want to enlarge this notion not only to talk about changing the status quo of how mission has been done, but to lift up the notion that when we appropriate knowledge it changes who we are. Historical inquiry is a tool for gaining knowledge about who we have been in order to determine who we are challenged to become. If historical inquiry involves re-examination of the past in order to bring to light that which has been hidden or lost, such inquiry will also shed light on what we must be and do for the future. It seems that people of every age believe that they are smarter than those who went before them. But we fail to remember that the blind spots, prejudices, and ignorance that befell those who went before us are in some way our lot, too, because the temptation to parochialism, universalizing of our experiences, and the stubborn belief in the supremacy of our own worldview is our temptation as well. Mindfulness of the diversity of perspectives and a profound respect for our own intellectual finitude (along with the humility that comes from this respect), opens us up to the possibility of being transformed by what we study about the past.

When David Walker penned his fiery jeremiad against slavery in 1829, one of the ways he sought to make his case for the dignity and worth of people of African descent was to recount their historical achievements of their ancestors:

When we take a retrospective view of the arts and sciences – the wise legislators – the Pyramids, and other magnificent buildings – the turning of the channel of the river Nile, by the sons of Africa or of Ham, among whom learning originated, and was carried thence into Greece, where it was improved upon and refined. Thence among the Romans, and all over the then

enlightened parts of the world, and it has been enlightening the dark and benighted minds of men from then, down to this day. I say, when I view retrospectively, the renown of that once mighty people, the children of our great progenitor I am indeed cheered. Yea further, when I view that mighty son of Africa, Hannibal, one of the greatest generals of antiquity, who defeated and cut off so many thousands of the white Romans or murderers, and who carried his victorious arms to the very gate of Rome, and I give it as my candid opinion, that had Carthage been well united and had given him good support, he would have carried that cruel and barbarous city by storm. But they were disunited, as the colored people are now, in the United States of America, the reason our natural enemies are enabled to keep their feet on our throats.¹⁵

Walker's *Appeal*, which was principally, but not solely addressed, to people of colour, particularly the enslaved, offered arguments to debunk the myth that Africans and those of African descent were 'savage', 'uncivilized', and somehow less than human. His own self-study of history, and his wish to impart the fruit of his study, was intended to affect a transformation of how blacks sometimes saw themselves as some succumbed to the systematic indoctrination that sought to portray them as innately inferior. The re-telling of their history as a people was designed to transform their way of seeing themselves and help to equip them to act out of this revised self-knowledge. Thus, historical inquiry is a powerful vehicle for empowerment.

Historical Inquiry and Experience

A popular adage is that 'History is told by the victors.'¹⁶ However, the respective histories of marginalized and subjugated peoples are a powerful antidote to this maxim. German Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer challenged theologians to engage in theological reflection from the perspective of those from the 'underside of history'. The proliferation of liberation theologians, which began in the late 1960s and which continues to this day, have been an attempt to overturn the weight of oppression that comes from the narratives of history as the creation and possession of the winners.

When we speak of mission and the role of historical inquiry, certain questions naturally come to mind. *Whose perspective? Whose experience? Which has the most weight?* These are weighty questions to ponder as we consider the role critical historical inquiry should play in Christian mission.

¹⁵ James Turner, 'Introduction', *David Walker's Appeal To the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in particular, and very expressly, to those of the United States of America* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1993), 39-40.

¹⁶ Sometimes 'winners' or 'conquerors' is substituted for 'victors'. This adage has been attributed variously to Winston Churchill, Alex Haley, and even Niccolo Machiavelli. Its source is unconfirmed.

It is imperative that continued attention be given to understanding mission from the perspective of those who in the past were recipients of mission activity, rather than strictly or primarily from the vantage point of the historical evangelizers. The more this perspective is brought to bear, the sooner repentance, healing, and renewal can transform the landscape of Christian mission. Moreover, there can be no comprehensive understanding of mission apart from learning about the nature of mission from the perspective of the marginalized. I welcome, embrace, and celebrate this shift in perspective. But even mission from the margins must be understood as an important perspective, not the *sole* perspective. We need to avoid losing the full picture, which all of us need, in order to understand the past and how it impinges upon the present and the future. Those who understand the value and worth of historical inquiry in any field recognize that a comprehensive story must constantly make room for other perspectives. This makes history complicated, messy, and harder to articulate in a way that does justice to full picture.

In our litany of valid complaints from the margins, we must uphold the ambiguities that accompany an historical inquiry. An either/or stance will not do. Neither maintaining the old traditional theologies and practices without challenge and critical assessment nor replacing them with 'new and improved' ones without the recognition of the provisional nature of our own theological orientations and practices will serve any of us well. The same careful, critical approach to historical inquiry of the past will have to be applied to our own contributions to the larger narrative of Christian mission. Although historical inquiry conducted in this way will present challenges, the promise that it can inform, reform, and transform makes it extremely worth the effort.

MISSION AS TESTIFYING TO THE EXPERIENCE OF MEETING WITH GOD

Zlatina Karavaltcheva

Abstract in Bulgarian

Настоящата статия очертава проблемите на православната мисия в съвременния посттоталитарен контекст и по-конкретно факторите, които възпрепятстват ефективността на църковното послание към обществото като цяло и към отделната личност. Открояват се две разбирания за смисъла и целите на християнската мисия – първото е базирано върху разбирането за християнската вяра като осветено от традицията учение, чието възприемане от широки кръгове хора гарантира приемственост на индивида с миналото, потвърждаване на националната идентичност и повишаване на моралното ниво и устойчивост на нацията. Вторият мисионерски подход произтича от опита, който придобива вярващият от личната си среща с Бога. Този опит променя перспективата и гледната точка към методите и целите на църковната мисия. Като нейна основна цел в този случай се очертава разпространението на евангелския модел на споделяне на вярата – която може да бъде само лично преживяна и е винаги личностно ориентирана.

Some Problems of Church Mission in Post-Totalitarian Societies

More than 20 years after the fall of totalitarian regimes the Eastern Church is faced with the dilemma of enabling the meeting between modern people and God. The immediate questions arise: Is the Gospel comprehensive enough for people in a post-communist ideological environment, who carry the legacy of a perception of the world different from what is in the Gospel? Or does the Gospel sound anachronistic, accessible only by a limited audience who are devoted to maintaining the existing traditions in their own way? The answer to this question is of particular importance to those who are called to lead the dialogue between the church and secular society, and who are concerned not only with the religious education of the believers, but also with those who are trying to find their way to the church.

In this paper I will outline the problems of Orthodox mission in the contemporary post-totalitarian context, and in particular the factors that hinder the effectiveness of the church's message to society as a whole and to individuals. Two different understandings of the meaning and tasks of

Christian mission are studied. The most common is based on the understanding of Christian faith as perfect and sanctified by traditional doctrine, important in connecting individuals with their past, confirming national identity and raising the moral level and stability of the nation. This interpretation of the Christian message is described here as an ideologization of faith and a transfer of some elements of the methods of totalitarian ideology into the field of church mission.

The second missionary approach, which we juxtapose with the first, has a limited diffusion and it derives from the experience of believers in their personal encounters with God. This experience changes the believers' perspectives on the methods and purposes of church mission. A main objective of mission in this case could be understood as encouraging the evangelical model of faith sharing. This faith can only be experienced personally. The difference between these two missionary perspectives is their comprehension of the supreme gift of God to humanity: spiritual freedom. These differences give rise to alternative understandings of the church's mission. It is the inner spiritual experience that I advocate both as essential for carrying out God's mission and as the aim of that mission. However, in order that we may appropriately witness to encounter with God we must understand the lived experience of those around us, that is, their context.

Contextual Experience

In the course of almost 15 years of work with various teams in Bulgaria, Georgia and Ukraine, where I have been engaged predominantly in ecclesiastical and educational activities, several issues stand out which seem also to apply in other countries regardless of their own distinct traits.

One major problem appears to be the inefficacy of internal mission. The term 'domestic church mission' means a process of evangelization or churching of the 'traditional orthodox', those who are baptized in childhood or adulthood. Many of these are in effect Christian-atheists and perhaps make up the majority of the society in post-communist countries. For them Orthodoxy remains simply a tool for cultural and national identity. Despite receiving government support and having the status of traditional (though not state) religion, the Orthodox Church has failed to exploit the large public interest that exists towards the 'forbidden fruit', which is how religion was perceived during the decades of Communism. It has not found a common language with people who wished to be free from a totalitarian ideology. Consequently, despite a revived interest in the Orthodox faith, many walked through the church as passers-by only to return to it on a few exceptional occasions in their lives – for baptism, wedding or burial service. This problem is also closely linked with the thorny issue of religious education in church schools and parish centres, to which I will return later. These educational establishments expect to teach the concept

of religious identity, as well as an answer to the key question 'What is the church?' This in turn, will determine the future missionary work of their alumni, who in principle should be the most active members of the church.

The second group of problems relates to the impaired communication between the church and society – primarily at media level, but also at the level of the internal church sermon whose recipients are Christians. Dialogue aids Christian testimony to the world and it remains fundamental to Christian mission. If Christian testimony is perceived as authentic, it will inevitably find expression in a dynamic dialogue. On the other hand, if the core of Christian testimony has been lost or is replaced by some form of imitation, then it will forego its vitality. And in losing its timeless relevance, it will fail to provide the stimulant for a serious conversation. By the ideology or ideologization of Christianity I mean the reduction of the Christian faith to a system of ideas that claim to be a comprehensive interpretation of reality, and in particular the relationship between God and humanity, but which give little credence to the experience of the person in the communion with Personal God. Ideology claims to organize community life properly, by giving the community what it deems to be the necessary knowledge about itself and thus suggesting to its adepts an unreal feeling of fullness and self-sufficiency. Those who take this approach of religious ideology, consider that church tradition, from the earliest time until today, dismisses the significance of personal experience in communion with Personal God. Yet this experience is both unique and unrepeatable and rooted in the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church, guaranteeing its catholicity. So the church experience is always shared – recognizable by the whole church as authentic and inspired by the Holy Spirit.

These two groups of problems are related to the crisis of religious identity, which the Orthodox churches are undergoing today.¹ Atheistic political regimes have interrupted the spiritual traditions in many European countries. As a result, the local churches find themselves in a new situation, having to give a clear and unequivocal answer to questions about a society attempting to free itself from atheism: 'Who are you? What makes you different from those who yesterday also preached the 'absolute truth'? How will you prove that you are different from the ideologues propagating Communist utopia? Can you give us something that the others cannot?' Naïve on the surface, these questions are spontaneous expressions of people's religious intuition. The church, sadly, finds it difficult to provide convincing answers. The language used in the past proved unintelligible and unfit for a present day communication. In order for the new language to respond appropriately to changing times, it has to be conceived in the

¹ Th Hopko, 'Orthodoxy in Post-Modern Pluralist Societies', *The Ecumenical Review*, 51 (1999) 364-371; Abbot P. Meshterinov, 'Jizn v Cerkvi. Cerkovnost ili ideologija', <http://kiev-orthodox.org/site/churchlife/1688/> ob. 10.04.2011; Chr Yannaras, 'The Church in Post-Communist Europe', *Lecture series at the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute*, Berkeley (1998) 24-27.

bosom of the church, the place where the meeting of humanity and God occurs.

God opens possibilities to people in periods of political change, so that, deprived of the inertia of tradition, they can find once again the true foundation of their faith and show it to the world. The church has a great need for people who have their own personal encounter with God, and are capable of expressing this experience in a comprehensible way, but without compromising the deep meaning of the Christian truth. Christian youth initiatives, whose work I know personally and who are primarily mission oriented,² have been caught between the two extremes of modernism. Those extremes are the adaptation of Christian doctrine to the ethical views of modern society and the conservatism which arises from the cultic religious vocabulary of the past. A bipolar model of liberalism-conservatism is not applicable to processes in the church community, because this model tends to simplify church life by organizing it mainly horizontally at the level of merely historical development of the Christian community. This leads to a loss of its vital eschatological dimension that puts the relationship between humanity and God beyond the limits of historical time and takes it into eternity.

Two Missiological Approaches

In search of the right direction to the hearts and minds of people, two main avenues of mission have emerged in the Eastern Church. The traditional one is well-trodden and was followed during the establishment of totalitarian regimes. This missionary approach is based on the imperative public sermon intended to enlighten society by renewing its acquaintance with the ethical principles and prohibitions of the church, and the negative consequences of their infringement. The other way of mission is new and unfamiliar. It corresponds to early Christianity, when Christ was accepted at the price of the disruption of the conventional and as costly personal choice. The church called it *martyria* – testimony given by witnesses. During the early Christian centuries, the term acquired the extended meaning of the endurance of suffering and/or death as a result of this witness. The early Christians who first began to use the term martyr in this new sense saw Jesus as the first and greatest martyr. The choice of the martyrs was powerful and convincing. Their testimony sprung from a meeting with a God, who is unknown to others, but for whom it was worth dying.

² These are the Orthodox Christian Movement St. Efimios in Bulgaria, created immediately after the fall of communism in 1989, BOYA, whose centre is in Greece, but has branches in all the Balkan countries, and the Theological college in Batumi, Georgia, where I worked on a CMS programme .

However, the twentieth century gave the world the bitter experience of another type of martyrdom. Thousands sacrificed their lives for their faith in anti-human totalitarian ideologies and carried the sacred gift of their lives over its altar. As the blood of martyrs is the seed which bears the fruit of faith in Christ, so martyrs of the totalitarian ideologies planted its seed in the soul of modern humanity. While the fruit of the grace of God in humanity is a powerful desire for spiritual freedom and communion with God, the totalitarian ideologies deprived people of freedom of thought and spread their ideas so that they survived even after the collapse of the communist regimes.

Our time is a unique historical period, a result of spiritual upheaval. It is characterized on the one hand with the collapse of all ideologies, with distrust of 'the whole concept of world and man', with a loss of confidence in so-called traditional values. On the other hand, there is an inability to break free from patterns of ideological thinking. The modern post-totalitarian society thinks with ideologies and through them fights the ghosts of the past. Among its ghostly enemies are not only myths of communism, but also religious values, particularly Christian, which are traditional in the countries of Eastern Europe. In modern society even the soul is a controversial issue. In this quixotic battle is the tragedy of our time and the great challenge facing the church mission.

In what follows, I would like to discuss the basic principles in both mission-enlightenment approaches that I described above. The first is based on an understanding of Christianity as a perfect religious ideology and the church as its main carrier and distributor. This missionary model can be called 'faith on the top of the spear'; it is extrovert and imperative in tone, addressing its message to the masses (society as a whole, a particular social group, or the entire Christian community) understood as a group of like-minded people. To illustrate the imperative model we will use the debate between church and political state power in Bulgaria in relation to the introduction of religion to the Bulgarian school curriculum. Throughout this discussion there is an implied comparison with the second approach, which I will call 'a shared faith-experience of meeting.' I believe that this dispute shows how the church in Bulgaria views itself, particularly its mission in society and priorities. In the concluding section of this essay I will turn to more positive advocacy of the second approach.

The Debate about Religious Education in Schools as a Clash of Ideologies

The question of introducing the subject 'Religion' in the regular school programme is a critical issue in state-church relations in post-communist European countries. Countries which are already established democracies primarily discuss the problem of form and content of the subject in the curriculum, as determining the way religion is taught and the degree of its

presence in the educational process. However, in East European countries the discussion centres around the right of students to receive knowledge about religion within a separate subject. Each country has sought its own approach for solving the problem. Two possible models of decision can be outlined: one is implemented in Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and Georgia, where religious education is compulsory and confessional. Pupils study Orthodox Christianity and are offered an alternative choice of secular ethics.

It assumes that those who study Orthodoxy are members of the Orthodox Church and are entitled to know the basics of their faith. In Bulgaria, the model also provides an opportunity for confessional study of Islam and the study of secular ethics for families with atheist views. The Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church emphasised the religious rather than the cultural-logical nature of the subject. The state developed its own concept of non-confessional compulsory religious education during 2007. However, the two working groups set up by the state and the Holy Synod failed to reach a compromise agreement and all proposals for the introduction of religion to the curriculum were abandoned in 2007/2008. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church has not convinced successive governments of the feasibility of its concept. I would like to dwell briefly on the church arguments and then outline the likely reasons for the problematic communication between the church and state authorities.

First, church motivation is based on several premises which concern the relationship between the church and state. Namely, the church today has a leading role to play in shaping national identity thus, the main function of the church remains the preservation of the cultural and religious identity of the nation; the advantage of church education is clear to all and this must be legally upheld. It is important to note that this model ignores the likelihood that the social interlocutor may not start from the same premise. For example, there are allegations that the church spiritualizes society by the emphasis on its divine nature and that the traditional, co-operation between church and state is no longer widely accepted.³ Secondly, the language used by participants in the church dialogue with society is built entirely on specific-church vocabulary. Thus, it remains incomprehensible to those who are not familiar with the meaning behind some terminology like 'sinfulness,' 'redemption,' 'reconciliation', and others. To this lexical problem is added the preferred archaic style of conversation from the pre-revolutionary period of the first half of the twentieth century. Characterized by the accumulation of many adjectives, religious images and metaphors, this style is very different from communication in contemporary society. Thus, it is very difficult to draw a constructive bridge for consensus

³ Cerkoven vestnik, 'Konzeptsia na Svetia Sinod za religiono obrazovanie', 19 (2007) 4.

between groups with different religious interests, since they have no common conversational ground.

Third, the church message may not have been understood by society as a whole because the media discourse has been carried on in the prevailing imperative mode. Generally, this may occur when a distinction is being made between the religious community and the secular society, between the church and the world. But Christianity has always claimed that the church and the world are not two opposing ontological entities, one of which is 'holy' and other 'evil'.⁴ The world is God's creation, which is called upon to find its fulfilment in being united with Christ. God himself has assigned the most important role in this process to the free will of humanity. But I have witnessed hostility towards 'secular people' which can become aggressive persuasion to turn to God at the expense of their own free will. The contemporary Greek theologian Athanasios Papathanasiou identified such a missionary approach as commercial marketing or ideological imperialism. The voice of the church must always sound like a call rather than coercion. An example is given by Philip the Apostle who says to the apostle Nathaniel: 'Come and see' (Jn 1:46) and learn by experience. Coercion risks pushing people into hypocrisy; that is, a public confession of views that they do not really believe.

The discussion of religious education in Bulgarian schools showed that the dialogue of the church with the state and society has become one of conflict. This has hardened the positions of both sides who have ceased seeking a solution; but perhaps most importantly, it has set society negatively towards the idea of religion classes in the regular curriculum. In terms of the effectiveness of the church mission, this initiative has ended in failure, at least for the present.

We should note that for centuries the missionary model of imperative ideology has worked successfully. Where government tolerance of Christianity, or the inclusion of Christian elements in the ideology of the state, is apparent there is a favourable social environment for the imperative type of communication. The state or other authority makes the choice on behalf of the individual who is expected to promote the tolerated ideology. This situation can be observed in Serbia, where Orthodoxy is the national ideology and in Romania, where clerics are civil servants and the Patriarch has the rank of a minister. In these societies, the imperative missionary approach gives superficially positive results.

However, I want to express some reservations about the effectiveness of this approach. It seems that if the first contact of people, especially the youth, with the teachings of Christ is in the form of Christian ideology, then it may fail to touch their hearts. Further than that, it can lead to a spiritual crisis, grow into an internal conflict and transform itself in a

⁴ A Papathanassiou, 'The Language of the Church and the Language of the World: An Adventure of Communication, or Conflict', *Sourozh* 76 (May, 1999) 36-43.

rebellion against the proposed conceptual model, rather than a starting point for conversation between individuals and the church – a field meeting between personal experience and the spiritual experience of the church. The mission of the church must take into account that the ‘modern man lives in a total devaluation of concepts’.⁵

Nowadays there are many words that say nothing and we are tired of hearing them – they neither feed us nor protect us. Yet, despite the intellectual fatigue of the contrived speech, people are eager to listen with their hearts, and this is the biggest chance for the Gospel.’⁶

Meeting with God: An Alternative Missionary Model

Even on a limited scale, the church in Bulgaria is also learning to apply another missionary model that we believe corresponds to the ancient church tradition and can be defined as ‘faith-experience of shared Meeting’. This model takes as a first and basic principle in its work the respect of the free will of humanity that is understood as an absolute condition for a spiritual dialogue with God and one’s neighbour. This model is not liberal in terms of modern theories of liberalism, because it considers freedom as God’s gift and as such, freedom is feasible in the fullness only of the personal union of humans with God, that is, in Theosis.⁷ But at the same time, this model is not conservative because it does not regard tradition as the supreme value which guarantees by itself the truth, but rather it accepts the tradition only if it can testify the actual occurrence of a meeting between humanity and Christ the Saviour. All Christians carry the experience of their own personal paths to God. Moses met God face to Face, Saul became Paul after his personal encounter with God, and their preaching was a call to the acquisition of their own experience of the Meeting. The quest for God that the saints experienced has as its main feature the spirit of freedom, in which they sought, found and recognized Christ.

The second major feature of the missionary model of shared experience is non-violence. This is a direct consequence of the respect for human freedom and it reveals a deep knowledge of the damage done to human nature from the Fall. Violence is not inherent in authentic human nature, but a consequence of the damage done to it, because humanity has taken the wrong direction. Created as a ‘second world – a little one within the great’⁸ it possesses great power, and if this power breaks free in the wrong

⁵ M Stoyadinov, ‘Pleneni ot Bojiata liubov’, *Mirna* 30 (2007) 21.

⁶ Stoyadinov, ‘Pleneni ot Bojiata liubov’, 23.

⁷ Divinization, deification, making divine or Theosis is the transforming effect of Divine grace. It is personal communion with God ‘face-to-face’. This concept of salvation is historical and fundamental for Christian understanding that is prominent in the Eastern Orthodox Church and to some extent to the Catholic Church.

⁸ John of Damascus, ‘Polnoe sobranie tvorenia sv. Ioanna Damaskina’, Sankt Peterburg, 1 (1913) 259-262.

direction, it can cause immense harm. But, if it is directed correctly, it can also bring infinite good. The essence of the historical human fall is due precisely to the wrongful direction of human forces. The human desire to impose a certain view on others, or a certain understanding (even if this happens to be the real truth), is in itself an expression of a desire for the use of violence implicitly instilled in the damaged human soul by the original sin. A Christian must have an experienced consciousness that Truth is Christ, and that Truth cannot be simply replaced with truths about him – no matter how beautiful and pious they happen to be.

Unlike the imperative missionary model, which relies on reactions of the masses, this missionary message is addressed to individual people. According to church understanding, a spiritually enriched person is born progressively as a result of a battle with selfishness and a realisation of the pain of others. Spiritual enrichment is gained in prayer as conversation with Christ, as well as in repentance, and sacrificial service to others and the beginning of its birth in the church. It is connected with the sacrament of Baptism, and its end in Theosis – communion with Divine nature (2 Pet 1:4). The nature of the Christian spiritual experience is such that it can only partially be shared with others. This sharing is through the participation of Christians in church worship and especially at its centre – in the Eucharist. But the spiritual experience is achieved through personal efforts and personal transformation. Only when one comes personally to know Christ can the spiritual experience of others become familiar too, and truly ecclesiastical. From this perspective, the missionary approach can only be strictly individual, non-aggressive, inviting an appointment through the testimony of the church, but without requiring the recipients to accept *a priori* received experience (even when it is clearly recognized) without themselves having tasted God (Ps. 33:9).

The Model of ‘Shared Meeting’

This understanding of the church mission has informed an educational model developed by a team of Bulgarian teachers and theologians and implemented by team members in three different missionary projects: multimedia presentations of religious festivals designed for teachers of religion in secular schools; a school of catechism for adults at the parish centre of the church ‘Pokrov’ in Sofia; and a lecture course at the Theological seminary in Batumi, Georgia, as part of a Church Mission Society (CMS) project with the local Archdiocese.

The Gospel offers the imperative of spiritual poverty as, according to Christ’s words, the path to blessedness and personal meeting with God. People who have already recognised their own spiritual poverty without Christ, will seek him not just to solve moral problems, nor to appease their conscience, or to give sense of their everyday lives, but because without Christ they are unhappy and unable to experience life in its fullness.

For these reasons, church mission, particularly in the education sector, should be directed to the awakening of precisely those spiritual senses of the individual, who today is in a state of consumer narcosis frantically seeking to silence any sense of the scarcity and compensate for it by over consumption. In this state it is very difficult to feel any spiritual hunger, or spiritual poverty, as even their slightest appearance can causes fear and desire for the emptiness to be filled immediately: to this end the culture of hedonism,⁹ in which we live offers us endless possibilities. The famous Russian missionary Abbot Peter Meshterinov writes that today the church is faced with an almost impossible task concerning not only church people, but also their enculturation. The hedonistic culture stands furthest from the individual's conscious understanding of the usefulness of life, from the Logos and the significance of its value. On the other hand, the 'Christian culture is primarily a way of thinking, this is the foundation of ethics and aesthetics based on personal responsibility and spiritual freedom, of education, of a non-traditional perception of the world, which accepts and reflects the multilayered nature and complexity of Christianity and that of the world in general'.¹⁰ Therefore, the purpose of the church's mission is primarily to awaken the individual personality and sense of responsibility: for example a sermon about quenching spiritual hunger remains misunderstood by those for whom this phenomenon remains unknown. Thus, this specific aspect of church work, especially with young people, makes the ideological approach of religious nominalism unsuitable for religious education. According to Abbot Meshterinov, the religious idea is valuable in itself, regardless of its incarnation.¹¹

For the religious position to be dialogical today, that is comprehensible and open to discussion, no matter where it occurs, it must base itself on the evangelical principles of early Christian preaching. These principles, as we mentioned previously, are spiritual, non-violent and offering unconditional respect for human free will.

The application of these principles in the missionary model of 'shared Meeting', in the projects mentioned above is important. These principles have catechetical character – in other words, they express themselves in the discipleship of adults who have already chosen to be members of the church. Without giving details of the three projects we will focus on the general educational model that the three of them followed. The model is developed on the evangelical missionary approach of Christ in his

⁹ Hedonism is a school of thought which argues that pleasure is the only intrinsic good.

¹⁰ P Meshterinov, 'Problemi vozerkovlenia', <http://www.kiev-orthodox.org/site/churchlife/1484/> (accessed on 26/05/2011).

¹¹ P Meshterinov, 'Jizn v Cerkvi', <http://kiev-orthodox.org/site/churchlife/1688/> (accessed on 26/05/2011).

conversation with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:5-42).¹² This conversation reveals Christ's attention to the individual, his kindness, his uncritical communication regardless of social prejudice, and his clear answers to the questions posed by the Samaritan woman. The result of this approach is that the Samaritan woman accepts in her heart the answer of Christ, that he is the expected Messiah: 'I who speak to you am he'. She not only personally met the Saviour, but experienced personally the truthfulness of his word. Her case is a stark contrast to the case of Pharisees and scribes, who also met Christ personally, but failed to experience of the Meeting with him in their hearts and remained alien to the faith.

In the foundation of this missionary approach the pedagogical principles of dialogue, relationship, realism and non-violence are laid down. The dialogic approach is characteristic for Christ the Saviour. He makes his interlocutor reach towards the answer of a question by himself, as is the case with the lawyer, who asks: 'And who is my neighbour?' (Lk 10: 29). He uses examples of acquaintances for all problems and in this way Christ does not force his way on others.¹³ For those working in the field of religious education, and all involved in dialogue between church and society it is of paramount importance to recognise the principle demonstrated by the saviour, who reads 'like an open book the soul of man'.¹⁴ Despite his omniscience, however, he leads his interlocutors to answer only those questions that plague and excite the souls of individuals. In practical terms this excludes communication of any ideological messages, because ideology does not comply with the specific spiritual quest of humanity: a personal path to God. To overcome the tendency of choosing the ideological approach in communication it is necessary for people to overcome selfishness, leave a narrowly defined worldview that satisfies only their own spiritual and intellectual pursuits and instead listen to others. Only through listening can the meeting with him take place. When Christ says, 'For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them' (Mt 18:20), he does not mean a gathering of self-contained or self-absorbed individuals who are unable to go beyond themselves and hear others, but only those 'two or three' who were able to meet each other, to hear the pain of the heart of their neighbour and even to make the pain of the other their own pain. 'For us, to go beyond ourselves means relation', wrote the Greek theologian Rev Nicholas Ludovikos.¹⁵ Those who feel self-sufficient in their truth cannot achieve the fullness of

¹² P Spirova, 'Jesus Christ as a missionary: a talk with the Samaritan woman' (to assist religious teachers). Gates of Orthodoxy (website) <http://www.dveri.bg/content/view/13339/186/> (accessed 20/05/2011).

¹³ P Spirova 'Religioznoto obrazovanie v diskursa na nenasilieto' (PhD thesis, Faculty of Theology, University of Sofia, 2008).

¹⁴ I Kogulis, *Katihitikh kai xristianikh paidagogikh* (Thessalonica, 1996), 67.

¹⁵ N Ludovikos, 'Malkite bogove i velikiat Bog'. <http://www.pravoslavie.bg/Беседа/Малките-богове-и-великият-Бог> (accessed 26/05/2011).

the catholic truth of the church. Their personal experience of God remains limited in the frame of selfishness and it is difficult for them to communicate with another or with the community. Without freedom of communication the model of the relationship between Christ and humanity results in an attempt to communicate solely 'by rules'. God is known only through a personal meeting with Christ, whose fruit is holiness, by sharing our way with him and with one another.

Conclusion

This chapter has explained something of the experience of post-communist societies. It has held up a model of mission which can communicate in this context and it has critiqued the prevalent model which attempts to coerce society into belief and church membership. During communism the church experienced persecution but it missed the historical chance to demonstrate a missional heroism of self-denial. After communism the church chose the wide path of spreading the Word of God by restricting it to socially useful ideology, by relying on the strength of national traditionalism, and arguing that its historical contributions have forged national identity. The transformation of Orthodoxy into ideology is one of the most serious obstacles for the witness of church in modern society. It seeks to 'persuade' people of the truth of certain 'Christian ideas', 'moral examples' and 'universal values'.¹⁶ But according to the words of the famous Greek philosopher Christos Yannaras, 'none of these things saves us from death'.

In today's dramatic epoch, which places in front of humanity a great variety of challenges, the responsibility of Christians is perhaps greater than it has ever been. The experience of the Meeting with God through Christ is the only distinctive thing that the church can offer to people. This is the source and the aim of the mission of the church. It is this which allows people to partake of the experience and life of the liturgy of the community. Everything else created by Christian civilization – moral values, culture, aesthetics – can be found elsewhere. But nothing can fill that special emptiness in us, that connects us with heaven and that cries to God: Come, Lord Jesus! (Revelation 22:20).

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¹⁶ S Tutekov, 'Pravoslaviето мејду идеологијата I јивота. Problemat na ideologizacijata na Carkvata', *Hristianstvo i kultura*, 8 (2003) 69-82.

PART TWO

**EXPLORING THE BIBLE
AS A FOUNDATION
FOR MISSION**

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TOWARDS A MISSIOLOGY INSPIRED BY THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Jacques Matthey

Abstract in French

La missiologie protestante est souvent «prophétique», insistant sur la transcendance de Dieu, la vocation au témoignage et une vision de l'histoire marquée par des temps forts. Le livre des Proverbes offre une alternative, permettant une plus grande ouverture à l'expérience, à la sagesse des nations et à la présence immanente de Dieu. Si sagesse et prophétie sont en tension, elles ne doivent pas être opposées; les hommes négligent trop souvent la voie vers la vie qui est à leur disposition et ont besoin d'incitation ou de rappel. Enfin, une lecture missiologique du discours de la Sagesse en Proverbes 8 offre deux priorités possibles pour le témoignage, l'une active de participation à la création, l'autre festive d'admiration du créateur. En effet, «dame Sagesse» peut y être comprise comme architecte de la création, ou comme la fille des origines qui par sa danse joyeuse encourage son Père créateur.

Introduction

This paper intends to contribute to the debate raised by the study on theme one 'Foundations for mission' in preparation of the Edinburgh 2010 event.¹ The report on theme one offered three entry-points: experiential, biblical and systematic. At the Edinburgh conference, there was much discussion on the first, because it was questioned whether experience could be considered as having foundational importance in theology.²

In what way is there evidence within the Bible for considering experience as one possible foundation for mission? Coming from a Western Reformed tradition, I want to address the issue by referring to biblical texts which have been relatively neglected by missiologists. My treatment of the matter will of course also bear the influence of my ecumenical experience as former staff member of the WCC. I will only consider some texts of the book of Proverbs. I write as missiologist and not as Old Testament scholar.

¹ Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim (eds), *Edinburgh 2010: Witnessing to Christ Today* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010), 10-33.

² Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (eds), *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum 2011), 121.

I do not intend to offer an overall definition of mission, but mainly to search how far the approach of some passages of the wisdom tradition can illuminate a contemporary search for faithfulness to God's mission.

Elements of a Classical Protestant Approach to Mission

In order to show how classical Protestant Western missiology has dealt with biblical foundations for mission, I will summarise David Bosch's clear description of issues at stake in chapter 2 of *Witness to the World*.³

Recognising differences in Protestant or Catholic approaches to the role of the Bible, Bosch reminds his readers that in nineteenth century missiology, even Protestants referred to other than biblical foundations. In a most appropriate comment, he also warns that even when a missiologist writes a chapter on biblical foundations at the start of his work, this is no guarantee of more authenticity in treating mission in accordance with the Bible. There is indeed no way of avoiding the hermeneutical circle in biblical interpretation, be it through deductive or inductive approaches.

Bosch summarises priorities in classical Protestant missiology as resulting from biblical interpretation. In the Old Testament, God is understood as a 'God who reveals himself as the One who among other characteristics has compassion on the poor, the oppressed, the weak and the outcast.'⁴ The relation between God and world needs an elected people, a specific group whom God calls to be his witness and with whom God makes a covenant. The dynamic of this history is revealed at the exodus as liberation event during which God reveals God's identity.

Such an approach has proved extremely fruitful for widening the perspective of mission to the realm of economics, politics and in particular to the plight of the poor and marginalised. The search of another approach in this paper must not be misunderstood as an attempt to diminish that cutting edge of mission, but to overcome some of its more problematic aspects.

One of them may be the (Western) worldview and vision of a history in progress, moving towards the *eschaton*, engendering depreciative attitudes towards creation and other religions. In such a perspective ahistoric cults can be seen as a threat to the mission of the biblical God and his people '...when the cyclical thought-pattern takes over and the historical character of biblical revelation and of the life of the believer in the present makes

³ David J Bosch, *Witness to the World. The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1980), part II. This is not a treatment of David Bosch's approach in general. *Witness to the World* was published much earlier than the masterly *Transforming Mission*. Bosch's reflections are here only to illustrate an approach which he summarises well.

⁴ Bosch, *Witness*, 50

room for the idea of eternal, immutable and timeless truths, one has left the soil of biblical revelation.⁵

In order to overcome limitations of classical missiology, it may be worth giving more emphasis to the wisdom tradition. Prophecy and wisdom differ in their approach of the origin of knowledge and the attitude to time and history.⁶ Prophecy results from a direct knowledge of the divine and a call to a specific mandate based on revelation, whereas wisdom builds on experimental knowledge and observation of world and humans. Prophecy implies an eschatological understanding of time, related to a decisive event, be it within or at the end of history, an event to which people have to react. The immediate future qualifies the present. In the wisdom approach, the future remains open and does not necessarily lead to a final point in time. Action is based on knowledge. The difference should not be overstated, since each tradition mixes and overlaps with the other.

Western missiology has shown more affinity with the vocational calling and the dramatic characteristics of time and history in prophecy, working with the reference to specifically important moments, *kairoi*, in history, such as the exodus. The relative neglect of the wisdom tradition appears when one considers its absence in many introductions to missiology or to biblical foundations for mission.⁷

⁵ Bosch, *Witness*, 60. This is included here as an example of an approach, and is not suggesting that Bosch himself stuck to it, although one must remember that even in *Transforming Mission*, Bosch does not deal satisfactorily with creation theology, women's issues, Pentecostals and pneumatology, to mention but some issues often neglected by classical Reformed missiologists.

⁶ Cf. Migaku Sato, 'Q à la croisée de la prophétie et de la sagesse', in Andreas Dettwiler et Daniel Marguerat (eds), *La source des paroles de Jésus (Q). Aux origines du christianisme* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2008), 109-115.

⁷ Although there may be some references to wisdom texts, there are no major chapters on wisdom theology in the following basic introductions or dictionaries: Donald Senior & Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983); David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991); Karl Müller, Theo Sundermeier, Stephen B. Bevans and Richard H. Bliese (eds), *Dictionary of Mission. Theology, History, Perspectives* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997); J Andrew Kirk, *What is Mission? Theological Explorations* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1999); Robert J. Schreiter (ed), *Mission in the Third Millennium* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001); Ion Bria, Philippe Chanson, Jacques Gadille et Marc Spindler (eds), *Dictionnaire oecuménique de missiologie. Cent mots pour la mission* (Association Francophone Oecuménique de Missiologie, Paris: Cerf; Genève: Labor et Fides; Yaoundé: CLE, 2001); Stephen B Bevans and Roger P Schroeder, *Constants in Context : A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004); James Chukwuma Okoye, *Israel and the Nations. A Mission Theology of the Old Testament* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006); Marie-Hélène Robert, Jacques Matthey et Catherine Vialle (eds), *Figures bibliques de la mission* (Association Francophone Oecuménique de Missiologie, Paris: Cerf, 2010).

A similar conclusion can be drawn from two overviews of the treatment of Old Testament texts in mission theology. The study of wisdom texts has rarely received more than peripheric interest.⁸ As welcome exceptions one could refer to studies by Lucien Legrand, a special issue of *IRM* on Bible and Mission and Christopher Wright's book on God's mission.⁹

It is interesting to read in overviews of classical theology and Old Testament exegetics that in these cases, too, priority has been given during long periods to historical theology, resulting in a neglect of creation and wisdom texts, considered secondary developments compared to the exodus story and related confessions of faith.¹⁰ One should thus not blame missiologists too much: they have been faithful disciples of their colleagues in biblical science and systematic theology.

Positive Appreciation of Experience – in the Book of Proverbs

Proverbs 6:6 'Go to the ant, you lazybones; consider its ways, and be wise.'¹¹

Wisdom is within reach of a human being, whether Israelite or not, religious or not, because one can find how to conduct one's life in a just way by observation. If even the ant, one of the smallest living beings, can become a model, then, no man or woman can be considered void of

⁸ Erich Scheuer, *Altes Testament und Mission. Zur Begründung des Missionsauftrages* (Giessen: Brunnen Verlag, 1996); Siegbert Riecker, *Mission im Alten Testament? Ein Forschungsüberblick mit Auswertung* (Beiheft Interkulturelle Theologie/Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft Nr 10, Frankfurt am Main: Lembeck, 2008).

⁹ See for example Lucien Legrand, *The Bible on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000); papers by John Prior and Danie C Van Zyl in: *International Review of Mission*, Vol. XCI No. 360, January 2002 (thematic issue on Bible Studies and Mission); Christopher JH Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Nottingham: IVP, 2006).

¹⁰ Othmar Keel and Silvia Schroer, *Schöpfung. Biblische Theologien im Kontext altorientalischer Religionen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht and Fribourg: Academic Press, second edition 2008). In the introduction and in chapter 1, the authors provide an overview of various Christian theological traditions (including liberation and eco-feminist theologies) and their treatment of creation. According to them, there is from a scientific and historical point of view no longer any reason to treat creation theology as secondary in Old Testament traditions. A recent German commentary on Proverbs comes to a similar conclusion as to the relative neglect of wisdom traditions in scholarship. Cf. Hans F. Fuhs, *Sprichwörter* (Die neue Echter Bibel. Kommentar zum Alten Testament mit der Einheitsübersetzung, Würzburg: Echter Verlag 2001), 12.

¹¹ All quotes from the Bible will be taken from *Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV) (Anglicized Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

wisdom as practical intelligence. Wisdom is universally available to whoever can observe and learn from experience.¹²

This positive appreciation of experience in Proverbs can be emphasised or hidden by translation choices. A particular case is the meaning of the term *da'at*, usually translated by 'knowledge'.¹³ Some scholars consider it nearer to 'experience'. They argue that the word implies concrete knowledge, not theoretical principles.¹⁴ The corresponding verb *jd'* (Prov. 12:10) means relational knowledge. In Proverbs 27:23-27, the shepherd knows how to deal with his animals through living with them. It is mainly experiential knowledge, not theory deducted from a system or from general principles. A contemporary translation 'knowledge' will give Bible readers the impression of wisdom as systematic theological approach to reality, whereas the translation 'experience' alludes to the concrete know-how gained. Such 'experience' is less depending on faith or correct theology, more on observation and discernment.¹⁵

Proverbs 10:17 'Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life; but one who rejects a rebuke goes astray.'

Individual experience, as valuable and essential as it is, because it can lead to a life in wisdom, needs to be connected, both positively and critically, with the accumulated knowledge and experience of those who preceded each individual person. Wisdom will be gained through what one experiences, through observation of what happens in nature and human relations, but not at the expense of listening to those who transmit the wisdom gained collectively by the people of Israel, a wisdom similar to that of neighbouring peoples and cultures and developed in dialogue with them.

One cannot deny that Proverbs show a fairly conservative approach to life and faith in general, unlike what contemporary missiologists would expect from an 'experience-based' approach. In Proverbs, there is a defence

¹² André Lelièvre et Alphonse Maillot, *Commentaire des Proverbes III, chapitres 1-9* (Lectio Divina, Commentaires 8, Paris: Cerf, 2000), 124. Compare Prov 24:30-34, 27:23-27 or 30:24-28. There is enough overlap between Hebrew wisdom sentences and those of other cultural and religious systems to affirm universality.

¹³ NRSV, but also recent translations such as the French language *Nouvelle Bible Segond* (Paris: Société Biblique Française, 2002), the German Bible in 'just language' *Bibel in gerechter Sprache* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006).

¹⁴ Terms parallel to *Da'at* in wisdom texts are: *Mûsâr* (instruction, often associated with discipline, including severe punishment); *Bînâh* (insight, intelligence, carrying the meaning of discernment. The root of the corresponding verb implies the idea of making a distinction); *'ormâh* (rare, covering meanings such as prudence, skill, know-how, in both positive and negative sense, e.g. the serpent in Gen 3:1) cf. Lelièvre & Maillot, *Commentaire III*, 20-22, 187.

¹⁵ One finds similar translation problems and choices e.g. in Prov 8:9-12 where it makes a difference whether one speaks of knowledge or of the experience on how to conduct one's life, how to pursue projects. *Da'at* could be brought in relation with good governance when considering its political implications in 8:15-16.

of the status quo and not much room for critique or disobedience. The creator God has overcome the original chaos by putting order and structures in nature and society, guaranteeing development and prosperity. A wise approach to life means to accept that those in power, the parents and wise people, have inherited this knowledge and are responsible for transmitting life-enhancing principles. Both creation and society are ordered by God according to principles which match what is written in God's Law. Observation and obedience must go hand in hand. In such a worldview, there is not much room for a 'radical' servant hood to God and one's neighbour.¹⁶ Unlike postmodern life-models, it is not creativity nor individual invention which will lead to fullness of life, but adaptation, obedience and respect of one's particular place in a – patriarchal – worldview of the universe.

For contemporary reflection, the issue is whether a positive appreciation of observation and personal experience as we find it in Proverbs can be uncoupled from a worldview according to which God has put in creation and in society similar (and overlapping) principles which one can discern through observation. The challenge is to understand whether and how contemporary worldviews allow for connections between reality and experience as observed and lived, and God's overall mission.¹⁷ In the ancient Orient, there was no 'secular' approach to reality. All reality, whether in politics, history or in nature, was considered permeated by the divine. It was thus logical that observation of reality would provide a potential access to knowledge of God. How to deal with that issue in a world that has been marked by post-Enlightenment science is a major challenge. This may explain why an emphasis on experience as basis for mission was raised more from within cultures less radically influenced by the Enlightenment than the contemporary West. Trends of postmodernity may offer new perspectives on such issues in a 're-enchanted' world.

Wisdom's Dramatic Appeal

If one can find wisdom through observation and experience, why then does the book of Proverbs contain such dramatic appeals – of prophetic character

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¹⁶ André Lelièvre et Alphonse Maillot, *Commentaire des Proverbes II, chapitres 19-31* (Lectio Divina, Commentaires 4, Paris: Cerf, 1996), 169. Jacques Vermeylen (pro manuscript), *A la recherche du bonheur. Sagesse de la Bible*. Notes de cours à l'usage des étudiants de la Faculté de Théologie de l'Université Catholique de Lille, 2007, 76.

¹⁷ Michael Welker e.g. doubts that there is any way to proceed in such direction, in particular also because of his critical position towards natural theology. Denominational traditions and priorities do matter in dealing with such issues. Michael Welker, *Gottes Geist, Theologie des Heiligen Geistes* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener-Verlag, zweite Auflage 1993), 107-108.

– by a personalised Wisdom? In Proverbs 1:20-33, she appears as a woman calling humans to understanding and to follow the path to life.¹⁸

The structure of the speech in chapter 1 is relatively simple:

v.20-21 presents Wisdom as a woman calling in the public realm. It is significant that she does not speak from a specifically sacred space.

v.22 sounds like an individual complaint prayer by Wisdom. She speaks like the Psalmist: how long will my suffering last? Prophets share similar feelings, usually however about the reactions by God's people. Here Wisdom complains about humans in general.

v.23 promises the outpouring of Wisdom's Spirit.¹⁹

v.24-27 explains the reason of Wisdom's suffering, in a direct address (you). It is the announcement of revenge as answer to and result of human's attitudes.

v.28-31 repeats the consequences of human choices, in indirect address (they). Verse 28 is in direct contradiction with famous promises of Wisdom (cf. in particular 8:17), here in form of a radical warning. Only authentic search combined with ethical life can succeed. Scholars emphasise that Wisdom speaks in her own name, like God would.

v.32-33 concludes in warning and promise. Humanity is divided and so will be its future in relation to Wisdom and to the Lord (v.29).

Wisdom speaks as a literary personification of the know-how on life that humans can gain on the basis of their *own experience*. She represents, however, even more the experience accumulated by *parents* of both gender and by *wise people transmitting the collective tradition* of the people of God. In a certain sense, she appears as both immanent in reality and creation, and transcendent, exterior to humans, because they do not naturally follow her instructions.

In v.23, Wisdom promises her Spirit (*ruah*) to those who follow her.²⁰ How should one understand here the reference to 'my Spirit', understood as parallel to 'my words'? There are several possibilities:

¹⁸ It is not within the purpose of this paper to interpret in more detail the significance of the wretched and 'foreign' attractive woman who calls in the streets in a similar way to Wisdom, but trying to twist men's (!) paths away from righteousness.

¹⁹ I cannot follow Fuh's thesis who considers that, in v.23, Wisdom turns into the negative the words of the promise of the Spirit (known from prophets such as Joel) to announce a coming of the Spirit that will judge and condemn. Fuhs, *Sprichwörter*, 28.

²⁰ Unfortunately, NRSV translates *ruah* here not with 'spirit' or 'breath', but with 'thoughts'. A further indication of the importance of translation choices for missiological reflection! According to scholars, the combination of the verb outpouring with *ruah* is unique in the Old Testament. In the following paragraphs, I chose to differentiate between the 'spirit' given to humans in creation and the 'Spirit' promised by Wisdom, because I see a potential connection between the latter and the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. However, one must remain aware that no such capitalisation is made in the original texts.

- feelings, attitudes
- life, vitality
- inspiration providing humans with intelligence to conduct their life
- Spirit as announced by the prophets, the gift of God for the end of time.²¹

To dig into the potential meaning of the promise, it is necessary to check texts with similar vocabulary. Proverbs 20:27 describes the human spirit (or inspiration) as lamp of the Lord that searches every inmost part.²² In Job 33:4, Elihu qualifies this inspiration as the breath which is in humans as created living beings: 'The spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.' In the same speech, in 32:8, that spirit provides understanding: 'But truly it is the spirit in a mortal, the breath of the Almighty, that makes for understanding.' Elihu justifies in this way why he, a young man, intervenes in the debate over Job's suffering. He does so only when he realises that the old men who had spoken before him had no wise solution to Job's plight.

This means that everyone is inspired by the breath of life, the spirit, the one who enables an understanding of reality and human existence. Experience can lead to wisdom, to life as God wants, because of the divine inspiration of all created human beings. It makes sense, thus, to consider experience as a basis for theology.

Verse 23 goes however a step further: Wisdom promises the outpouring of her Spirit to those who effectively lead a life that follows the path wished by God and proclaimed by her. Why should that be necessary? Humans, according to Proverbs 1, have the capacity of neglecting the insights of their inner light, their divine inspiration. They rebuke those who convey the message of wisdom. In theory, humans could reach a synthesis between interpretation of their experience, obedience to traditional teaching and acceptance of Wisdom's message. They do, however, in majority follow a path contrary to these life-providing insights and fall into ways leading to pride, conflict, violence, injustice and death. It is as if they loved to darken and obscure the light that could shine in and from them.²³

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²¹ Lelièvre & Maillot, *Commentaire III*, 35; *Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible, Ancien Testament* (Edition intégrale, Paris: Cerf et Les Bergers et les Mages, 1975), 1519.

²² In Prov 6:23 the same light is brought by the commandment and the teaching. There is an indirect parallel between the illumination given by the divine spirit in humans and by the divine teaching in tradition.

²³ The balance in Proverbs 1 between what is potentially given and what happens in reality is not without similarity with famous texts such as the Prologue in John or Romans 1-2. In all these texts, one encounters an ambivalence. Relation with God is at hand, but communion is blocked. Proverbs 8 or Acts 17 acknowledge the same tension, but with a more optimistic outlook.

To redress such dramatic failure, humans must accept to return²⁴ to Wisdom and listen to her message. This will result in an inner renewal of human body, soul and mind resulting from the charismatic gift of the Spirit in a kind of new creation act. Wisdom's mission is to call back people who have gone astray. In her speech, she combines a severe warning with an extra-ordinary promise. This has parallels with prophetic texts, where the choice is also between life and death, and the renewing Spirit is promised to those choosing life. The difference between prophetic and wisdom traditions must not be overstated.

If we discern in this passage a link between wisdom teaching and charismatic gift of the Spirit, we have here an early announcement and preview of Pentecost in another than a prophetic book. The contemporary interpreter sees here a possible link between wisdom and charisms. Such a convergence is badly needed in missiology. There are too many wise people who know all that is true in theology or ethics, but lack the charism and dynamism to live the truth, to motivate and lead others. There are also too many missionaries full of charisms, but lacking the minimum wisdom as to the best way to provide a credible witness in the contemporary world, respecting other people.²⁵ If only 'lady' Wisdom and her sister the Spirit could meet more often in the human heart!

At this stage of the reflection, one can summarise the following significance for mission:

It is to **acknowledge** the reality of this wisdom which can be reached by humans through the means of their experience and observation. They can find in themselves the principles of a life according to God's wishes (*missio Dei*). Mission must first encourage a following of the inspiration given universally to each one by God the creator.

It is also part of mission to **exhort and encourage** people to a best possible discernment of the collective wisdom embedded in their own cultural and religious tradition, in a critical and constructive way.²⁶ Such a search will need to be attentive to the wisdoms of other cultures and religions, in a dialogical perspective.

Mission also leads us to **invite** all people to acknowledge the identity in purpose between the wisdom they have found with the wisdom offered by the biblical God and sharpened in the Gospel of Jesus Christ who speaks with wisdom.

Mission, however, also prophetically **denounces** individual and collective choices that lead far away from God, in a destructive dynamic of pride and individual sin, injustice, violence, destruction of nature and death.

²⁴ The Hebrew has *shouv*, one of the Old Testament verbs for conversion.

²⁵ In 1 Cor 12:8, the first charism mentioned is the word of wisdom. In Prov 1, there is also a parallel between spirit, word and wisdom.

²⁶ Similarities in ethics and life-style among religions and cultures have been repeatedly emphasised in missiology and provide the basis e.g. for Hans Küng's project of world ethos.

As such, mission **calls** to return to God, a movement implying forms of conversion.

Mission also **promises** the gift of the wise God's Spirit to all people of good will who walk the way to life and have not chosen the way to death.

Wisdom is Universally Available

Moving forward to an interpretation of Wisdom's speech in chapter 8, we will find some of the observations we already made confirmed, in particular the ambiguity of human response to God's call and the universal availability of wisdom. However, the chapter also offers perspectives not present throughout the book of Proverbs and which can bear significance for contemporary missiology.²⁷

In verses 4-5, the Hebrew terms used for humans combine universalist characteristics with critical appreciation.²⁸ Proverbs is not universalist out of anthropological optimism, but on the basis of the availability of God's wisdom to everyone. Too often, in contemporary debates on the relation between Christians and people of other faiths, theological universalism seems to go hand in hand with the idea that people are by nature good, since they are God's children. One has the impression of an overstressed optimism which does not explain why the shape of the world is as bad as it is. On the other side, exclusivist positions tend to consider all humans only as sinners, incapable of any real link with God's affairs and God's wisdom, a position that neglects all examples of sincere humility and highest ethics and struggle for real justice in all cultures, as well as similarities between the Bible and foundational texts of other faiths.

Verses 15-16 confirm Proverbs' positive judgment on political power. In the conservative approach, the status quo is seen as providing justice and a sustainable society. The wisdom tradition allows for a positive approach to the role of those in power, and this independently of their religious affiliation. Even 'pagan' governments can then be inspired by God's wisdom and thus play a role in *missio Dei*, an insight shared by prophets. But this should not result in support of all governing structures. For a contemporary approach, one would need to consider how Qohelet and Job

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²⁷ For the study of Proverbs 8, I have worked with Lelièvre & Maillot, *Commentaire III*; Vermeylen, *A la recherche du bonheur*; Fuhs, *Sprichwörter*; Keel & Schroer, *Schöpfung* and Irmtraud Fischer, *Femmes sages et dame Sagesse dans l'Ancien Testament. Femmes conseillères et éducatrices au nom de Dieu* (Paris: Cerf, 2010, original in German).

²⁸ Men, *ishim*, the first term, is very rare and appears only in two other texts of the OT, in both with critical notes. In Is 53:3 the term describes the people who despise and reject the suffering servant. In Ps 141:4 the 'men' are those involved in iniquity and wicked deeds. The parallel 'sons of adam' seems more universal, if one excepts the gender qualification. In the next verse, the 'young' are the unexperienced, vulnerable and partly dull folks. Cf. Vermeylen, *A la recherche*, 120.

have criticised such optimism from within the wisdom tradition.²⁹ And the text of Proverbs 8 itself relativises the support given to the political powers. There are elements which provide criteria to judge how far wisdom is from God and this applies to politics as well. They include: speaking the truth, honesty; humility and the rebuke of pride or arrogance; practice of righteousness and justice. Finally, in verses 17-21 Wisdom offers to everybody the possibility of knowing her. The 'democratisation' of Wisdom's availability, enlarged to every human being, has the potential of opening up a space for critical judgment of kings and powerful governments, including religious authorities.

This promise has considerable missiological significance. God who has already equipped every human with the Creator's breath of life confirms that it is indeed the very core of God's mission to *share*, to foster communion of life in love with humanity and creation. Wisdom in this text represents that part of God's own intimate being which is in direct relation with humans and knowledgeable to them. That relation grows out of love as human effort to live an ethical life and of love as gift coming from God. It is the personalised Wisdom who speaks in this text, not God. Wisdom remains distinct from God. But intimately related with God: Wisdom speaks as if God was speaking.³⁰ One could formulate this mystery by saying that wisdom represents the face of God as turned in love towards creation and humanity. It is through wisdom that God is within reach of human experience. But the fullness of such a relation lies always in the future, immediate or far, because it is promised as gift of the Spirit that provides wisdom, God's gift empowering humans for love and life in fullness, respectful of God, other humans and all of creation. We constantly live in tension between an 'already' and a 'not yet', tension between the insights provided by the divine breath of life moving us and the expected full empowerment resulting from the charismatic gift of all wisdom that is promised.

This tension between a possible and an impossible relation with God accompanied the biblical and church tradition since its beginnings and will do so until the *eschaton*. I don't believe we will ever be able to resolve the tension. The purpose in this paper is to point to the more optimistic affirmations, as they have been taken up and reaffirmed in other biblical texts, such as Wisdom 6:12-16 with parallels in the prophetic traditions (Jeremiah 29:13, Joel). We can even find an echo of it in the New Testament when Jesus, who can be considered an incarnation of Wisdom,³¹

²⁹ See e.g. Job 28. To address the issue fully would require another paper.

³⁰ Vermeulen, *A la recherche*, 116 points to the fact that Prov 1: 28 affirms of Wisdom what the other texts say of YHWH himself.

³¹ A serious wrestling with the way wisdom theology and tradition have influenced the New Testament, the early source of Jesus' words (Q) and Jesus' own person, as well as christology and pneumatology exceeds what is attempted in this limited paper. Cf. Jacques Trublet (ed) *La Sagesse biblique. De l'Ancien au Nouveau*

promised in Luke 11:9-10 that all who seek will find an answer by God and even receive the Holy Spirit (Lk 11:13).

According to the conclusion of Wisdom's speech in v.32-36, the promise to find her has theological and soteriological weight. Those who search and love wisdom will enjoy life and receive God's favour. This term is linked to benediction in other texts such as Deuteronomy 33:23 and Psalm 5:13 or to God's mercy in Isaiah 60:10. In Proverbs 1, the parallel speech promises the Spirit. All of these are theologically loaded terms which point to a right relation with God, a relation marked by grace and benediction – with prosperous consequences (cf. the concrete promises in chapter 8). We have here one of the Bible texts challenging exclusive assumptions on salvation. The access to God's love, favour and benediction, to God's grace, to communion with God, is open for a human being who earnestly and honestly puts his or her whole energy in searching for God's wisdom as she is discernable in nature and human experience, personal and collective. There is a universally available 'window to heaven'. Life in fullness is possible in relative independence from religious affiliation, whether to the people of Israel or to Christian churches.

One should insist on the term '*relatively* independent'. Indeed, in its present edited form, the book of Proverbs assumes identity of content between the wisdom which is within reach of human search and the content of God's revealed word and law.

How Dance and Praise Contribute to *Missio Dei*

What then is Wisdom's relation to God and to creation? The many textual and translation difficulties of this chapter sound like a warning to acknowledge our limitations: we deal with issues on which we are not to know everything. The mystery of God's own being pleas for *apophatic* theology.

In v.22–26, there is a chronological and theological priority given to Wisdom over everything else in creation. Due to the metaphor of birth used, Wisdom gains a particularly intimate relation with God, being not only a creature, but God's first-born daughter.³² However, although Wisdom appears in several places of Proverbs with divine-like characteristics, she is in this fundamental text clearly referred to as a creature and not as a divinity. Despite her particular relation with God, Wisdom is not God. Whether Wisdom has received royal unction or installation, as v.23 could indicate, remains an unresolved issue. It would fit with the immediate context and her political role. However, an

Testament (Lectio Divina 160, Actes du XVe congrès de l'Association catholique française pour l'étude de la Bible. Paris: Cerf, 1995).

³² Fischer, *femmes sages*, 231, points to the consequences of the birth metaphor on the image of God. The Bible, she says, uses both feminine and masculine metaphors to describe God, independently of the fact that the grammatical case is masculine.

alternative reading of the Hebrew original refers to a verb meaning that she has been ‘woven’, a most poetic reference to her birth and creation.³³ The translation choice can influence the priority given to the overall interpretation of the role and function of wisdom in creation, as results from an understanding of verse 30.

Then I was beside him, like a master worker (or little child) and I was daily (his) delight, rejoicing with him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race. (v.30-31)

There are basically two major lines of understanding the beginning of v.30, pointing to two metaphors describing wisdom’s role in creation.

Wisdom can be understood as an architect, an artist, a master worker, who has an active role of participation in God’s creation. This tradition appears elsewhere in the book of Proverbs (cf. 3:19) and in other texts linked with the wisdom tradition (Ps 104:24; Wisdom 7:21-22 and 8:4-6) or of Jewish-Hellenistic literature.

According to this first interpretation, *missio Dei* appears as a kind of well-planned project, based on principles and rules, with aims and objectives and logic consequences, manifest in creation and *oikoumene*, in history of nature and peoples. The frequent biblical parallel between Wisdom and Word reinforces the organisational and logical emphasis on mission, in particular in Hellenistic contexts, where one imagines a basic principle holding together everything that exists. *Missio Dei* can then be interpreted in the sense of what happened in the 1960s, with an inner logic in history – and, one would need to add, in creation – moving towards an end that is called shalom or kingdom of God. Wisdom represents that immanent principle, can be grasped by human mind and lead to a life in connection with the dynamics of creation and the movement of history. The church’s mission is to discern this wisdom and call humans to a similar discernment and to a way of life embodying it. Christ as incarnated Word illuminates in a more profound and authentic way how everything is planned and dynamically moved by God, leading to the final consummation.³⁴

The second interpretation understands Wisdom as a young female child that plays in front of the parent, a beloved little one needing support by father or mother.³⁵ In this second perspective, Wisdom has no active, no

³³ The Hebrew verb ‘anoit’ or ‘set up’ is found in Psalm 2:6 (‘I have set my king on Zion’), and this can reinforce a ‘royal’ interpretation of wisdom in Proverbs 8. The alternative reading is however defended by many scholars. Cf. Fuhs, *Sprichwörter*, 66; Vermeylen, *A la recherche*, 122, and Fischer, *Femmes sages*, 231. Keel and Schroer, *Schöpfung*, 220, translate it as ‘formed’.

³⁴ The parallel between ‘wisdom’ and ‘word’ appears in several biblical references, in particular also in Ps 119 where the psalmist rejoices in God’s Thora in the same terms as Wisdom rejoices here.

³⁵ This second interpretation seems to have the favour of many Old Testament scholars, according to Vermeylen, *A la recherche*, 122-123. Lelièvre & Maillot,

direct, participation in God's creation. She supports or encourages the Creator through her joyful and playing presence. According to my reading, there is no indication in the verbs of 8:22-29 of any active contribution of Wisdom to creation.³⁶ In v.30-31, Wisdom's 'action' is to dance, to sing and be happy, both in relation to God and God's *oikoumene* as well as in relation to human beings. The second reading also fits well in the context of the passage. Indeed, the story's imagery considers Wisdom at the beginning of her life, and so the idea to keep a young child in mind during the whole chapter makes sense. Wisdom who has become an adult woman recalls with pleasure and pride her own origin and childhood.

As missiologist I am fascinated by this second image. It is through dancing, singing and joy that Wisdom participates in creation and supports, encourages, God. Her contribution to creation and *missio Dei* is an indirect, but very important one, similar to the role the public plays for improving the performance of artists or children for inspiring their parents. Wisdom, in this second hypothesis, bears less 'rational' and more emotional, musical, characteristics. She enjoys watching the whole of creation and has pleasure not only being in God's presence, but also being in presence of all created beings, including humanity.

If we consider the whole of the book of Proverbs, this second hypothesis can explain the suffering of the adult woman speaking in chapter 1, where she emphasises how much she is hurt by the refusal of humans to follow her. From her childhood on, she enjoyed their company to the point of dancing and singing. Like the children in Luke 7:32, she has played and danced, and the people have rebuked her. In that perspective, mission according to wisdom theology would include a participation in God's own experience of suffering, because of evil and because God is not acknowledged as the One who does so much to overcome chaos. Other wisdom texts than Proverbs allow for a deeper reflection on the challenge of evil to theology.³⁷

In any case, following this second interpretation, mission is marked by less 'rational' and more emotional intelligence, less argumentation, more festive playing. Relation with God mediated through Wisdom – the wisdom which humans can reach – pertains more to the category of presence than of action, of liturgy and praise rather than organisation. Whether this could

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Commentaire III, 180-182 give an extended survey of the various hypotheses. In the end, they themselves combine the two main interpretations by referring to 'a young artist' (194). Keel and Schroer, *Schöpfung*, 221 understand wisdom as 'expert' woman who gives new energy to the Creator by her attractive dance. They criticise the usual reference to a small female child or baby on the basis of parallel texts on divinities in the surrounding world and the similar vocabulary for dancing in 2 Samuel 6: 5. 21, a dance which shocked some people!

³⁶ Wisdom speaks in the first person feminine and all the action verbs are in third person masculine, referring to God.

³⁷ See the articles referred to in the *IRM* on Bible Studies and Mission.

imply also a less linear understanding of time and history should remain an open question.³⁸

There seems to be no final argument for the one or the other interpretation in the scholarly literature. One may then be allowed to consider this uncertainty as a chance for a definition of *missio Dei* and our own mission. It lies in the potentialities of the creative interaction between both interpretations. Referred to the creation story as transmitted in Genesis 1, one could say that in the perspective of Proverbs 8, creation and Sabbath go hand in hand, and the Sabbath accompanies creation throughout – in a constant interface. The joyful emotion of Wisdom echoes the tradition showing how God is saying at the end of every day that creation is good (cf. also Ps 104:31-34). The principle behind and active in creation and history is both the order overcoming chaos and the joyful witness to an artistic master-piece. God includes the fullness of the organising *logos* and the playing *sophia*.

Towards More Dialogue with Indigenous Cultures

In my own Reformed tradition, however, as well as in my personal and ecumenical experience, the second hypothesis has not been taken seriously enough. The biblical tradition itself, it seems, has given priority to the first, ‘operational’ understanding of Wisdom’s participation in creation and history, with important developments in later christology, pneumatology (*veni creator Spiritus*) and trinitarian theology.³⁹ It may thus be allowed to point in conclusion to the interest of the less emphasised interpretation. Wisdom, established prior to everything in creation and history, points to an essential principle and way of life, that of a joyful respect of God and God’s creation, admiring and acclaiming God for God’s work. In consequence the mission of humanity and of the church follows Wisdom’s call by giving priority to the praise of the Creator and the respectful admiration of the cosmos including all created beings. Human experience resulting from observation of what happens in creation leads to being well inserted in it, in a respectful way, giving credit to God for what God is doing. Those cultures and religious traditions that have grasped something of this more ‘passive’, ‘meditative’, ‘festive’ or ‘dancing’ wisdom may enrich human experience by providing guidance as to the limited role of humanity in creation. Such wisdom theology has surely more connections with the tradition embodied by many indigenous cultures than with those strongly marked by Enlightenment. This second reading of Proverbs 8 may have more importance for a revision of humanity’s relation to creation than Genesis 1. It must be acknowledged of course that the biblical tradition

³⁸ A question however which would have important bearing on intercultural debates, on dialogue between worldviews.

³⁹ See e.g. Jn 1:2, Col 1:17 and Rev 3:14.

itself seems, as indicated, to give more weight to the first interpretation. Perhaps, Jesus' own admiration for the beauty of creation in Luke 12:27 and his insistence on humility as well as on the priority of children in the kingdom of God are indirect reminders of the story of the female child wisdom in Proverbs 8. Some of Jesus' priorities in the Sermon on the Mount could also allude to such a respectful ethics. For pneumatology, this would imply a less 'activist' and 'dramatic' understanding of the Holy Spirit, pointing towards more 'meditative' and 'celebrative' characteristics (cf. Rom 14:17). How far the promised gift of Wisdom's Spirit in Proverbs 1:23 points to the universal availability of the Spirit may be the subject of other studies. According to the interpretation here defended, it would be a dynamic force for respect of the creation and praise to her Creator.



BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR LIBERATIVE MISSION FROM LATIN AMERICA

Néstor Miguez

Abstract in Spanish

Este capítulo busca mostrar como un particular contexto y lugar de lectura pueden hacer variar el enfoque con el cual se realiza la hermenéutica bíblica que sostiene la misión. La experiencia latinoamericana, una mixtura de culturas a partir de los pueblos originarios, la conquista, y las sucesivas oleadas migratorias externas e internas, así como las influencias culturales múltiples que la afectaron, más aún en estos tiempos de globalización, nos aporta posibilidades para una revisión de la forma de comprender los textos bíblicos que se han usado para dar fundamento a la tarea misionera de la Iglesia. Ello nos lleva a incursionar también en el Antiguo Testamento, mostrando que la fe cristiana debe asumir también las misiones encomendadas a la humanidad toda y al pueblo de Israel. En ese sentido entendemos que la misión de la Iglesia incluye el cuidado de la creación, la preservación de la identidad de los pueblos, el sentido profético de la justicia tanto como la proclamación del tiempo mesiánico y la irrupción del Reino.

The Practical Tension Between Bible and Mission

The practice referred to as the 'hermeneutic circle' in Bible reading in Latin America has demonstrated effectively that questions taken to the text from the point of view of a critical vision of the living reality create suspicion of the interests and inclinations of the preceding reading and open the possibility of new interpretations. In our case, the forms and dimensions taken by the missions of different Christian churches on the American continent offer us a historic panorama that creates the possibility for re-reading biblical sources and rediscovering their meaning for a new missionary praxis in the continent.

The Christian religion first arrived in what is now called Latin America through the Iberian expression of Christianity towards the end of the fifteenth century and beginning of the sixteenth century. It saw itself as a civilising force confronting the 'barbarous people' who inhabited the territory. Columbus himself understood the significance of his name from the Greek, Christophorous, to be the Christ bearer. According to David Bosch it was the Jesuits (an order of Spanish origin) who were the first to

use the word 'mission' in the sense of sending to evangelise non-Christian territories, just at that time and with that objective.¹ Conquest and evangelization went hand in hand, the cross and the sword acted as one. There were exceptions that vindicated the need of a respectful evangelization of the indigenous peoples. But the general rule was the thirst for gold, that dominated this period, including the evangelising endeavours and ecclesiastical mentality.² In this context the Bible was a closed Bible, which acted more as a symbol of power or cultural artefact than a provider of doctrinal content for the task of evangelization. When it was opened in the hands of friars like Antonio de Montesinos, Bartolomé de las Casas and others, it would result as a critique of mission as developed by the majority of the church.³

Centuries later a new evangelising mission arrived with the Protestant/evangelical churches. In this case the reading of the New Testament text predominantly emphasized a conversionist theology, based fundamentally on the interpretation of the end of St. Matthew's Gospel. Clearly here the biblical text was presented open and its reading was encouraged. But that reading was already conditioned by the biases of missionary sources principally from England and the United States of North America. It was a reading 'of the missionaries' and it was not exempt from cultural and political and, sometimes indirectly, economic interests. The development of capitalism accompanied this phase, and even though its religious impact at a popular level was less than expected, the Protestant churches emphasized their missional intention of being a 'modernising force' to combat obscurantism of the original religions as well as of dominant Catholicism. Together with evangelical zeal they brought a political and cultural attitude that was open to the interests of those powers which began to impose their dominance in this part of the world.⁴ The dominance was achieved in great measure, but the evangelization was hardly effective.

On the basis of this brief historical background I assume the task of re-examining the missionary mandate from the pages of the Scriptures. The spurious motives that accompanied Christian mission have already been rehearsed and criticised sufficiently so I will not delay too long over them.⁵

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¹ David Bosch, *Misión en transformación* (Grand Rapids, MI: Libros Desafío, 2000), 16; English version p.1.

² See, for example, the study by Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Dios o el oro en las Indias Siglo XVI* (Lima, Perú: Ediciones CEP, 1989).

³ See Néstor Míguez, 'Latin American Reading of the Bible: Experiences, Challenges and its Practice,' *The Expository Times*, vol 118 no 3, December 2006, 120-129.

⁴ See, for example, Jean-Pierre Bastian, *Breve Historia del protestantismo en América Latina* (México: Ediciones CUPSA, 1990).

⁵ See, for example, Bastian, *Breve Historia*.

As a continent that has been regarded as a 'field for mission', a target for different missionary enterprises, we are particularly sensitive to the implications of the way of rendering meaning to biblical texts. From this we discover the bias given to previous Bible readings and we propose a different approach, that may be valid for the current situation in our continent and also serve as an opening to dialogue with other contexts and situations with which current globalisation both helps and obliges us to interact.

The first thing to acknowledge is the place of the readings of the so called 'missionary texts', noting that Matthew 28:18-20 is the most often quoted. A way of reading, the location of the readers and their social context is in the case of mission rapidly transformed into a way of action. To bring a simple example, the mandate 'to go and make disciples' given to eleven humble, doubting men taken by surprise in a rural environment in the immensities of a hostile empire, is not the same as the mandate being read from the power base of an imperial potentate which would use all its force, its arms and tools of dominance. What in one case is a challenge to a weak and incipient group to take a life-threatening proposal to confront an Imperial crucifying power, in the second is seen as an eternal authorization of conquest, the justification for the expansion and imposition of its power. Nor is its reception the same: a pilgrim preacher who lives humbly with those with whom he shares his faith does not transmit the same message, as one who preaches as he disembarks from a gunboat, accompanied by armed troops, or who announces his presence with oversized publicity posters and stays in a luxurious five star hotel, or who descends from a private jet, ostentatiously adorned with gold and projecting symbols of infallible authority. The words may be the same, but the message is not.

The missionary texts read from positions of non-power, from weakness, are a message that restores threatened dignity, that brings confidence in the sense of divine mercy to the humble poor, affirms the power of life over death (which is what the eleven received in Galilee). Then the sending assumes another dimension: it can be understood as an alternative to the oppressive powers that religious pride allied to imperial power have thrust upon them. Only when the poor, the humble, the victims of plunder and prejudice signify anew the message to transform their pain into hope, to recover sense and joy, to anticipate the messianic time as a time of life abundant, to sense themselves strengthened to challenge injustice, is the mission converted into evangelization, the proclamation of good news (Lk 4:16-19). For this to happen, the biblical texts have to speak to daily problems and demonstrate their transforming power. It is not the missionaries' Bible that converts, it is the complex revamping of the message from below ground level of enslaved humanity that calls out for their dignity. There God makes Godself 'missionary', drawing near to enslaved humanity to redeem it (Ex 3 6-9). The missionary God emptied God's divinity and assumed the form of a slave to show the human liberty

of the slave (Phil 2:6-11).⁶ That makes the difference between the religious varnish imposed by the brush of the colonizer and the liberating power of the messianic force in us.

To read the Bible as missionary text and to see the Christian faith as a missionary faith today supposes, therefore, that we look at the problems that affect our people and affect – in different ways in our globalised world – the *oikoumene* in its entirety. This will be our reading guide, which will enable us to see the biblical basis of mission. It also implies attending to texts that have rarely been considered as missionary texts, and rescuing them as words of evangelical commitment and announcement. In that sense we must revalue vetero-testamentary texts as indicators of mission.

The First Missionary Task: Care of Creation

Is the Christian mission different to the mission commended to all humanity? The first critical observation that comes from the experience of being a missionised continent, is that the mission has been understood as something that Christians have done ‘towards’ the rest of humanity. But, is it really like this? Is it not the missionary task of faith to make us more human, in order to fully fulfil our human vocation, and not to distinguish us in contrast to the world that God created and loves? It is worth considering the first command that comes from God and is directed to humanity as a whole:

And God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’ So God created humankind in God’s own image, in the image of God created them; male and female created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’ (Gen 1 26-28)⁷

That is to say, that the first divine mission to human beings is established in the same act of creation and obliges us to connect responsibly to the whole of creation. We are conscious of the abuses that have lead to an exaggerated understanding of the verb ‘dominate’. The original peoples of what is today called America had a respect and care for the earth and its fruits which permitted them to ‘dominate’ without destroying, because they saw ‘Mother Earth’ – Pachamama – as the fount of life that the deity provided. But Christianity called this superstition and demonised it,

⁶ See my commentary on this text, ‘La libertad de ser humano. Lectura de Filipenses 2:6-11 como canto liberador,’ in G Hansen (ed), *Los caminos inexhaustibles de la Palabra. Homenaje a JS Croatto en su 70 aniversario* (Buenos Aires: Lumen-Isedet, 2000).

⁷ The NRSV of the Bible (OUP, 1995) is used.

prohibited and pursued it. And in its place proposed a voracious exploitation of the resources and a criminal lack of concern – which today we recognise as suicidal – for the integrity of the creation.

Mission ended up denying its first mandate. But care for creation did not cease to be a divine mandate. Nature did not stop being the source of food for all humanity (Gen 1:29-30), even for those who neither have money nor control the markets, although greed excludes them from the benefits of creation. The possibility and responsibility to share and expand the work of creation places us in a position to comply with divine will. And I cannot think of another basis for the mission than that of obeying and fulfilling the express will of God.

In today's world, where lack of responsibility for creation puts in check the totality of life on the planet, where lack of restraint in accumulation and gross waste and inequality in the use of resources creates hunger for a great part of humanity, the verses in Genesis chapter 1 should be read as part of our mission. This obligates us to think that there is no mission 'from' the church 'to' non believers without needing to understand first that there is a mission of the church 'with' the whole of humanity.

The Creation of a People

It was Noah's responsibility, by divine mandate, to rescue animal and human life from the wrath of God (Gen 6:12-22). From his time, according to the biblical story, the peoples of the world multiplied 'by their families, their languages, their lands, and their nations' (Gen 10:31-32). When this plurality saw itself threatened by the imperial project of Babel, of the powerful Nimrod, God himself intervenes to assure this multiplicity of expressions of human life (Gen 11:1-9; cf with Gen 10:8-10).⁸ The genealogies extend till they reach the formation of a new people from the seed of Abram. The specific mission task given to the patriarch culminates in a sentence of universal projection: 'in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed' (Gen 12:1-3). In this people must be reflected the saving will of God to all peoples.

The understanding of the election of Israel is, once again, ambiguous and lends itself to abuse. The very biblical history shows the deviations and folly incurred by Israel, no different to those that affected other peoples. But if we abide by the abrahamic mandate, the sense of this calling and of this mission is to show the nature of the identity of a people, the fight to preserve their faith, their language, their families and even their lands. Is this will of God towards Abraham opposed to the divine will towards other

⁸ To see an interpretation of the story of Babel not as a punishment but as a liberating act of God, consult my article 'Comparative Bible Study. Genesis 10-11: An Approach from Argentina,' in P Wickeri (ed), *Scripture, Community and Mission: A Festschrift in Honor of D Preman Niles* (Hong Kong: The Christian Conference of Asia and the Council for World Mission, 2002).

peoples? Does God desire for Israel what he denies to the rest? Paul himself, according to Acts, affirms that it is the will of God that there should be a joyous life for all peoples: 'In past generations he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways; yet he has not left himself without a witness in doing good – giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy' (Acts 14:16-17). The condition he makes is that they recognise that this has been given by God the creator and not by mythological idols (Acts.14:15).

The abrahamic mission, to be a people of blessing in the midst of other peoples, passes on to his descendants, including those who are descendants by faith (Gal 3:6-8, where the text from Gen 12:3 is quoted). The Christian faith does not seek to annul the identity of peoples, but rather, on the contrary, to construct a messianic reference at the heart of each people, that may act as a factor of renewal, as an empowering force of its own human dignity. The mission is not to dissolve the peoples in a unity without identities but rather to conform a 'people of peoples', who all recognise themselves in their diversity and also in their mutual solidarity.

This factor is part of the dialogue of God with humanity. In the book of Revelation the slain lamb is praised since, 'for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation' (Rev 5:9 see also Rev 14:6). But this does not dissolve identities, since nations and their kings come to the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:24). The Pauline announcement that, 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3:28) is not the dissolution of peoples but rather of hierarchies, as it enables one to appreciate the equality between the slave and the free or between man and woman. Unity in Christ does not ignore the diversity of cultures: it affirms them within the solidarity of a love without asymmetries. And the mission of the church must recognise them as such, in the manner it makes itself Jewish to the Jews and Greek to the Greeks (1 Cor 9:20-22).

The experience of the native peoples of America (a matter that is similar to other situations) is that the Christian mission resulted in cultural disdain, in a dilution of identities, and indirectly in genocide, the most cruel in the history of humanity.⁹ The Christian faith was able to take root at times producing a 'syncretistic' Christianity, very often condemned by the very missions that had sowed the biblical message, and at other times co-opted from a desire to dominate. With time, the Gospel generated in the peoples of the continent a desire to struggle for their own dignity, thus giving a foothold to vernacular theologies with a bias towards liberation. The

⁹ It is calculated that the population of the Americas on the arrival of Europeans was approximately 90 million inhabitants. In one generation this was reduced to half that figure. For a history of this continuing demographic and cultural genocide see Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of Pillage of a Continent* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973).

popular reading of the Bible served to provide a space for renewal in Roman Catholic as well as evangelical sectors. New interpretations, be they indigenous, peasants, people of African descent, or the Latin-American feminist contribution, illuminated from their experiences other interpretations of the scriptures.¹⁰ The reading of the Bible acquired a new meaning, and from subordinate peoples its words gave impulse to a new understanding of the mission. The believers from these communities re-evaluated their mission in society and affirmed in this way a missionary dimension that committed them to their immediate surroundings, to the construction of their peoples and to 'being a blessing for all nations'. If there is a shared mission with all humanity within the shelter of creation, there is also a mission that is effected in the recognition of the diversity of cultures in the building of peoples.

Justice for the Poor

In his encyclopaedic work on mission, David Bosch points out that 'in recent years, however, another New Testament passage has come to take a prominent place in the debate concerning the biblical foundation for mission, to wit, Luke's version of the sermon preached by Jesus in the synagogue in his native town of Nazareth, where he applies to himself and to his ministry the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1ff. Especially in conciliar circles of the theology of liberation, Luke 4:16-21 has replaced, in practical terms, the "Great Commission" of Matthew as a key text to understand not only the mission of Christ but also the mission of the church.'¹¹

If, as Bosch points out, the text from Isaiah is a key text in this sense, it is not an isolated text in the vision of the Old Testament prophets. The most ancient prophets return to the theme of justice again and again. The prophets Isaiah, Micah, Amos and Jeremiah nurture us with strong messages: they denounce unmeasured ambition, corruption, the accumulation of extravagant luxury, the failure to remember the poor neighbours, responsibilities towards widows, orphans and foreigners. If on one hand, Israel appears to be a people destined to show the road to redemption, on the other Israel is broken by divisions which within her bosom create the injustices, the oppression, and the abuse by the powerful.

The peoples are, it is worth remembering, units of permanent tension, where one sees the blessing of God but at the same time one notes arbitrariness and exclusions. Within these conditions some raise their voices to reclaim the portion of those who have no portion, the plundering

¹⁰ In this way the movement 'Lectura Popular de la Biblia' provided a popular root hermeneutic. The first example published in book form (previously there were only leaflets and bulletins) was edited by the Nicaraguan poet Ernesto Cardenal, *El Evangelio en Solentiname*. In English *The Gospel in Solentiname* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1976, republished 2010).

¹¹ Bosch, *Misión en transformación*, 113-114.

of the frail, the denouncement of oppressive practices, and excess of power. That was the mission of the prophets of Israel. Society is not a uniform entity to which one has to preach a religion that unites and contains; it is a complex mixture where one finds the consequences of sinful idol worship, of pride, usury and lack of love. It is a reality to be transformed by the message and action. God inspires his prophets in this sense.

Denouncing, however, does not suffice if one aims to transform. Only a resistance fortified by hope and by a creative sense of life will stand up to the powerful. Only a resistance that offers consolation in pain can be sustained. And so the mission and vocation of the prophet was to denounce the empty cult and to prophesy punishment, the prophets' role is also to offer consolation (Is 40:1-2). The task of denouncing and consoling is completed with the commitment to justice and announcement of liberation. Isaiah himself is thus an example of these three dimensions of the prophetic vocation, of these three callings of God, as facets of mission: denouncing of injustices (especially chapters 1-12), the word of consolation which renews an anguished people (chapters 40-45) and the proclamation of restitution to the poor, the oppressed, imprisoned, the suffering, which are shown in the final chapters of the book, especially in the text quoted by Jesus. That prophetic mission is that assumed by Jesus in his sermon in Nazareth and is in some way the foundation stone of the mission of the church as the continuing mission of the prophets of Israel and of Jesus himself. And so a new missionary dimension arises from the biblical message; the transformation of the social life on the basis of the claim of justice, of the good news, that places hope in the hunger of the poor, liberty in the anguish of the oppressed, light in the eyes of the blind, and a firm step in those who stumble. The faith in Christ affirms that this has fulfilment in the presence of the messianic community, and assumes in this way the fate of the unfortunate, shares the struggle of the exiles, and seeks the freedom of the captives. Again in this it is not alone – other multitudes of people from a diversity of beliefs and lifestyles, as well as organizations, other religious sectors, well meaning men and women have discovered that solidarity makes us more human.

Witness to the Messianic Presence

If we share mission with the whole of humanity, with the peoples of the world, and in the struggle of the destitute, what then is the mission of the church, what the sense and meaning of the Christian faith? Here again the biblical testimony shows mission and meaning starting from the mission of Jesus, 'Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news"'. (Mk 1:14-15). In the prophetic quote from Isaiah the mission that Jesus assumes is 'to preach the year of the Lord's favour' (Lk 4:19), the presence of the Christ

of God breaks into human history, he accepts it and changes it, he enters and transforms it. The life of humanity is no longer the simple passing of the centuries. Something new has happened, not new because it is novel but rather new because it changes and give new meaning to all that has gone before.

Time is no longer lineal: the Reign of God no longer waits at the end of the road. The future comes closer, the absolute becomes transitory (the Word became flesh, Jn 1:14), time has been fulfilled, and the reign of God has become present. It is present not as an ending that finishes with human history (and therefore all human liberty), but rather as a presence in the midst of history that permits and stimulates the liberty with which 'Christ has set us free' (Gal 5:1). The Reign of God is announced, therefore not as the last but rather as the eternal: it vitalizes time from the inert, time-as-continuum-without-ruptures, 'normal' time of the domination. A rupture, the unthinkable waited for, the anticipated, is in us; 'but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen?' (Rom 8:23-24).

In this hope of a new time, life is lived by the cristic presence of the Spirit, of which we are a pledge (2 Cor 5:5). That time that coexists, yet at the same time, is different from chronological time, is what we announce and live: 'So, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new *creation*;¹² everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new' (2 Cor 5:17). We are already that new creation, a new humanity created according to God in justice and sanctity of the truth (Eph 4:24). Of this we are witnesses and this we announce; it is not a case of adhering to a determined religious vision, and least of all to a religious institution. It is about integrating in that cloud of witnesses who by their lives and word commit themselves to a new time that overshadows all times, of a new creation that grows within the old one.

Proclaiming the Reign of God is not about the human progress of the 'civilizing mission' of liberal Christianity; rather it is to be expressed in the internal discontinuities manifested in every culture. These are the unexpected previews that prefigure the Reign; but when any historical system tries to perpetuate itself in time and become historic authority, then they deny it, even if it calls itself Christian. The Reign of God is expressed in the attentive ear to the scream of the excluded, the clamour of the enslaved, the service to the wounded at the side of the road; the task is to accompany them to bind the wounds, to care, and to restore because in that way we share in the mission of God, in the love of God (Lk 10:30-37).

¹² The Greek word is *ktisis* and should be translated 'creation'. Paul's idea was not that each individual believer is a new creature, but that one who is in Christ participates in all things new, a renewal of all that has been created.

The mission of the church is therefore, from the reading of the Scriptures, to witness to the 'ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8), but not only in the geographical sense, but in the sense of seeking the inclusion of the excluded, as the Lord does in the parable of the vineyard of divine justice (Mt 20:1-16). It is in the renewal of our minds so that, set apart from dominating worldly schemes, we may know the right divine will (Rom 12:1-2). The faith that we are called to proclaim till the end of times, because Christ is with us, that in which we have the mandate to disciple and baptise (Mt 28:16-20) is not done from the church as power base or from the arrogance of the one who thinks he is right, but rather like those eleven sent, to share in the daily crossing of 'normal' times of domination with messianic times that anticipate the Reign of God, and that invite all men and women to participate and to anticipate the new creation that redeems our bodies.

The Mission: Summary of Mandates

Often it has been thought that the advent of each new mission implies forgetting or denying the previous ones, that each new mandate closes a stage, leaves behind one time and supposes the beginning without continuity. However the ministry of Jesus, as a model of the mission of God commended to humanity and to his church, results in assuming each one of the previous mandates and integrating them into the proclamation. Jesus as the Christ of God dialogues with the whole creation ('Who then is this, that even the wind and sea obey him?' Mk 4:41), seeks to restore his people ('I was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' Mt 15:24), seeks justice for the poor and feeds the hungry (2 Cor 9:9-10), is in himself the presence of the messianic Reign.

A reading of the whole Bible, and not just a selection of 'missionary text' passages, opens the horizon of the mission and commits one to a total task. In this way the church is called to participate actively with the rest of humanity in the mission of the care of creation, to recognize itself as part of the work of the creator, but at the same time as responsible for the common house we inhabit. In each place Christian mission recognizes the identity and dignity of each people and culture, participates in their life and encourages their dignity, it affirms their right to their land, to their languages, to their families and organization as a nation. In each context a missionary community identifies itself and makes its own the clamour of the poor, understanding by this not only those who live in economic penury, but all women and men, boys and girls who suffer prejudice, abandonment, starvation, the violence of being 'collateral victims,' and the plundering by oppressive systems. In this identification is announced the presence of Jesus Messiah in our lives. The missionaries, that is, every Christian, makes himself a witness of God's Reign, discovers, in the dark clouds of sin that overwhelm him or her, who is the light of the world. We

acknowledge the fissures of human history, and know that this does not come to an end through the unbridled desire of the ideologues of power, but rather will culminate in the Reign that God has promised, in the eternity that awaits in the resurrection. In this way all our Bible gives testimony to the Word of God and sustains the mission that God commends to God's own.



THE BIBLE IN AND THROUGH MISSION AND MISSION IN THE BIBLE: DOING MISSION THROUGH CONTEXTUAL BIBLE STUDY IN POSTCOLONIAL AFRICA

R Simangaliso Kumalo

Abstract in isiZulu

Leliphepha lizocubungula ubudlelwano obusondelene phakathi kwe Bhayibheli nokuthunywa ukusebenzela iBandla ngesikhathi esingemuva kokubuswa nokulawulwa abezizwe. Ngokukhulu ukucophelelela sizobuka izinhlaka ezintathu: Umthetho olawulwa yiBhayibheli, ubucayi nobumqoka bokusetshenziswa abasebenza ngokuthunywa amaBandla nendlela ababehumusha noma bechaza ngazo iBhayibheli. Umbhali uphonsa inselelo lapho eqagula khona ethi iBhayibheli alisetshenziswanga abezimishani kuphela kepha bese liwenza umsebenzi wokuthunywa phakathi kwabantu ngokwalo. Ethatha emlandweni wakhe wokuhola nokufundisa ngeBhayibheli ngokugxila esimweni sezimpilo zabantu (Contextual Bible Study), engusoPolitiki wakwaLizwi. Ucwanginga ngendlela yokufunda iBhayibheli esimweni sokuphila njengendlela okuyiyo yokukhuthaza ukusetshenziswa kweBhayibheli esimweni sokuthunywa ngokweBandla. Wenza umboniso ngokucaphuna isifundo sebhayibheli esimweni sempilo yabantu incwadi ka- 1 Samuel 8:1-22. Uhlongoza ukuthi uhlelo lokufundisa ngeBhayibheli ngokugxila esimweni sokuphila kwabantu iyona ndlela eyiyo yokusebenzisa iBhayibheli njengomhlahlandlela wokuhola abantu ngendlela yokuthunywa iBandla ephokophelele ekuguqulweni kwezimo ezilwa nengcindezi nokukhuleka kwabantu emphakathini abaphila kuwona.

Introduction

To explain the function and significance of the Bible in Africa, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu tells his most popular story. He says that, 'When the white man came to our country he had the Bible and we had the land. The white man told us to close our eyes and pray. After the prayer, the white man had the land and we had the Bible. That is how we lost our land,' Tutu explains. 'But you see now we are using the Bible to get back

our land. In the end we shall have both the Bible and our land. That is a better deal.’¹ This is a very popular story that continues to be told in most communities in South Africa. In his anecdote, Tutu has summarized the relationship that people in Africa have with the Bible. It is the most popular book in many communities. Dispossessed and poor people believe that through the Bible – reading, praying and acting on the hope it gives to them – they will transform their lives. But Tutu’s story is not only popular with Christians, it is even more popular amongst politicized people who have very little interest in the church. Given this complex relationship that people have with the Bible, this paper’s aim is to examine the role of the Bible in mission in the African context.

In this paper, ‘mission’ is understood as the inspired activities of Christians that bring about the realization of God’s work of redemption and liberation to others, so that they experience lasting transformation to their lives both as individuals and as members of society. This definition takes cognizance of the fact that *missio Dei* can only find expression through human beings. In this sense, *missio Dei* is closely related to *missio hominon*, the mission of humanity. Without the involvement of humanity, the mission of God remains idealistic. It follows that when human beings are engaged in mission they will be involved in a compelling task where they act with a delegated authority from God. Defined in this way, mission is not just about pitching tents for church planting and evangelization, nor is it about setting up soup kitchens to feed the hungry, but rather it subsumes all the complex activities of the community of faith in order to contribute to realizing God’s dream of giving life in its fullness to all people. This does include activities of charity but goes beyond them to issues of social justice and equality. It is about making the world a better place for all people and the whole of creation. It is in light of this comprehensive understanding of mission that this paper examines the role of the Bible.

Tutu’s story illustrates the centrality of the Bible (*sola scriptura*) in Christian missions. Unfortunately, its role was not only positive or to the benefit of the recipients of mission. It contributed to deprivation and dispossession of their land and freedom. In the usual Tutu style, he also turns the issue around to see the other side of the story, which is the role that the Bible is playing today. For him, the Bible has become a tool of liberation, not disempowerment, for the many people of the world, especially in third-world countries where the centre of gravity of Christianity is now found. These Christian nations are now using the Bible to get back their land, to regain their freedom and to transform their situation of deprivation. From my experience as both a mission practitioner and as an academic I agree with Tutu in his assertion, because that is how

¹ Quoted in Gerald West, *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1999), 9.

and why people read the Bible in my context. People in the third-world, who once experienced oppression justified through the Bible, are now using the Bible to find their place and position of privilege in God's creation. They use it as a source and instrument of liberation for the total transformation of our situation of poverty and deprivation. A method that helps people to re-read the Bible and read it differently so that it gives them a liberating message is called the Contextual Bible Study (CBS). People even re-read texts that were once used to oppress, suddenly discovering in them a message of liberation. Suddenly the texts are no longer against them but on their side. In this paper, I examine the role of the Bible in mission through a case study in which a project of a University of KwaZulu-Natal, namely the Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research, uses the Bible in and *for* mission.

The Challenges of the Bible and Mission for Today's Church

Tutu's anecdote captures the importance of the Bible for communities. Since over 72% of the South African population is Christian,² the Bible occupies an important place not only in their spiritual lives but also their political and developmental visions. This is because their context of pain, poverty and disease requires a message of hope and transformation. Canaan Banana observed that,

Theologically, the church has to re-assess the implications of the Christian message in a new social, political and economic climate. Theology in my view, while finding its base from the Biblical text, it must of necessity find expression with the context of the human situation.³

In almost every house there is a Bible which gives hope and encouragement to people that one day their lives will be transformed. This hope does not depend on it being read – it may be in the house collecting dust – but the fact that people have the Bible and hold it in high regard is an indication of their belief in its significance for their lives. By possessing a copy of the Bible, people experience a feeling of hope that one day their lives will be better. Some carry it proudly to church on Sundays; others carry it to the weekly prayer meetings that they attend. They use it to celebrate success and also to comfort one another in times pain and tribulation. In this way the Bible is in mission, touching people's lives with or without the assistance of the church. In the early 1990s I used to travel by train to and from work. Every train had services and preachers who read the Bible and preached for the passengers. People looked forward to these

² Jurgen Hendricks & Johannes Erasmus, 'Religion in South Africa: The 2001 Population Census Data', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 121, March 2005, 88-111.

³ Canaan Banana, *The Gospel According to the Ghetto* (Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1980), 95.

services and Bible readings, which most of the time used literal interpretation methods. This was the same with buses – they had services and Bible study groups. Gospel channels such as Soweto Television and Igagasi FM are other instruments that concentrate on the preaching of the Bible. In almost every black community in Africa there is a tent ministry where the gospel is preached every evening. People who are faced with multiple problems such as poverty, HIV and AIDS, and violence, be it political or family orientated, flock to these revival meetings in search of relief. However, in these arenas, they come across Bible-punching preachers and Bible study leaders who are not theologically trained and who use the Bible to teach their views on life and other fundamental issues that affect people. This raises problems that I will address further below.

The church has always intentionally used the Bible in its mission endeavours. It finds its mandate to carry out its mission in the Bible, and its mission is to teach the Bible to people, for the word gives life. Therefore the Bible is deeply rooted in the mission enterprise both on its own and through those who are committed to reading it with the people, even sometimes without being led by the organized church. Although, on one hand, we would like to celebrate the presence and activity of the Bible in communities, the problem is that its impact on people's lives can also be negative. When handled by untrained or ordinary readers, the Bible can be used as a weapon of *mass destruction*. When it is interpreted from a fundamentalist point of view, for example, the Bible is used to justify the relegation of women to inferior positions in society by using what feminist scholars have seen as discriminating to women. It is misused when its interpretation promotes political apathy by encouraging people to lift up their eyes to the Lord from whence their help will come⁴ instead of encouraging them to participate in real initiatives and activities that would likely change their lives – lives that are steeped in poverty, unemployment and political problems. Where it is used without caution and handled by untrained readers, the Bible can strip people of their meagre resources and freedom by giving them false hope. The misuse of the Bible has given ammunition to those who criticize the Bible, the church and its mission. Critics of the church and its mission in South Africa point to the way the Bible has been used to promote patriarchy, racism, the prosperity gospel, and so on.⁵ Part of the mission of the church is to rescue the Bible from being abused by opportunists who manipulate it to preach bad theology. There is a need to redeem the church from the perception that it is negative and exploitive. One way this can be done is through emphasizing critical and contextual methods of handling and reading the Bible.

⁴ Ps 121:1.

⁵ Gifford, P, *Christianity Politics and Public Life in Kenya* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009).

The term Bible comes from the Latin *biblia*, meaning books, and therefore we refer to the books of the Bible. While these books were wholly inspired by God, it does not mean that they are inerrant or without error. They were written by people with their own perspectives, biases, weaknesses and strengths (though some argue that God inspired the Bible mechanically such that every word, every comma, full stop and so on came from God). The weaknesses of these authors are not weaknesses of God, however. The texts of terror⁶ in the Bible reflect the weaknesses of the writers and the human actors in the stories, not God. God remains infallible. God inspired the text and left the responsibility of the actual writing to people who had answered a call to be God's partners in mission.

The Bible in Mission: The Biblical foundations of the CBS

The concern about the problematic and ambiguous nature of the Bible has led to the urgency of critical and contextual methods of the re-reading of the Bible, if it is to enable mission that is redemptive and liberating for African people and for the rest of the world. Whilst being aware of the historical development of mission that came from the North to the South over a number of centuries, this paper is interested in the understanding that mission is no longer the monopoly of the North, but rather its gravity has shifted to the South. It celebrates the achievements of the missionary enterprise as done by the North to the South. It ponders on the many mistakes that were committed and prays that those well-meaning mission practitioners who made these mistakes will be forgiven. At the same time, it looks forward to the future of mission. It is aware that the future of mission rests in the South. The South not only has the responsibility to carry the mission to the North but needs to look at better and different models of doing mission, including searching for new models of handling and using the Bible. There is a need to learn from the mistakes of the past so that they are not repeated. The Bible cannot be used again for dispossession in the name of mission. It rather needs to be used for development and empowerment so that mission is understood as a life-giving exercise. In this light, I focus in the next section on the Bible study method known as the Contextual Bible Study, or CBS, that was designed and has been used by the Ujamaa project since its inception in 1990.

In August 2010, Ujamaa celebrated 20 years of existence and work. A comprehensive report on the work that was presented at the celebrations emphasized that the purpose of CBS is to work for the liberation of people

⁶ The phrase 'texts of terror' refers to those passages which contain scenes of violence or moral degradation. See Phyllis Tribble, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1984).

in and *through* the Bible.⁷ The report goes further to state that the biblical foundation for Jamaa was derived from the text in Matthew that reads, ‘and Jesus said to them, “Every trained reader who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of her or his treasure what is new and what is old”’.⁸ The original mandate of the Institute of the Study of the Bible, now called Ujamaa, was to read the Bible with people in communities who were faced with the life-denying political violence in the township. Gerald West explained the aim:

To attempt to develop a dialogue between biblical studies and ordinary readers of the Bible, particularly the poor and oppressed. Given that the Bible has played and will continue to play a significant role in the life of Christians in South Africa, *the primary aim of the (Ujamaa project) is to establish an interface between biblical studies and ordinary reader’s of the Bible in the church and community that will facilitate social transformation.*⁹

West goes further to explain that the need for CBS came from a request by members of the community to the university. The people were asking the university community (School of Religion and Theology especially the Biblical Scholars), ‘What is God saying to us in this situation?’¹⁰ In order to respond to this question, readers of the Bible from the University of KwaZulu-Natal came together with ordinary readers of the Bible from the community to ‘discover what God was saying in our context of suffering’.¹¹ Thus the Ujamaa project was a result of the collaboration between readers from the two communities; academic and ordinary.

By reading the Bible together, both the scholars and the ordinary readers changed from being objects of the Bible to becoming subjects. In West’s words, the Bible became ‘the people’s book’.¹² A new relationship of interdependency between the Bible and the people developed. Today, the issue is no longer what the Bible did to the people in the past but rather what people are doing *with* and *through* the Bible today. They are using it to liberate and transform their lives and situations. This has caused one of the prominent South African biblical scholars, Takatso Mofokeng to conclude that the Bible is both a problem and a solution.¹³ West takes the discussion further by explaining why the Bible is both a problem and a solution by saying that:

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⁷ Gerald West (ed), *Report of the work of Ujamaa 1990-2010*. Unpublished report submitted to the twentieth celebration of the Ujamaa Centre for Research and Community Development, in Pietermaritzburg August 2011, 1.

⁸ Mt 13:52

⁹ Gerald West, *Contextual Bible Study* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1993), 86.

¹⁰ West, *Contextual Bible Study*, 87.

¹¹ West, *Contextual Bible Study*, 86.

¹² West, *Contextual Bible Study*, 86.

¹³ Takatso Mofokeng, ‘Black Christians, the Bible and Liberation’, *The Journal of Black Theology* 2 (1988), 34-93.

The external problem of the Bible is the oppressive and reactionary use of the Bible by white Christians. The internal problem of the Bible is the Bible itself.... (for in it) there are numerous texts, stories and traditions which lend themselves to only oppressive interpretations and oppressive uses because of their inherent oppressive nature. What is more, any attempt to save or co-opt these oppressive texts for the oppressed only serves the interests of the oppressor.¹⁴

The good news is that black theologians who are committed to both the Bible and the struggle for liberation have not allowed the dilemma of the Bible to continue as it is but have decided to 'shape the Bible into a formidable weapon in the hands of the oppressed instead of leaving it to confuse, frustrate or even destroy our people'.¹⁵ Again drawing from Mofokeng, West notes that 'it was not only black theologians who were shaping the Bible into a formidable weapon'¹⁶ but also ordinary people as they continued to read the Bible in the context of their daily struggles. Mofokeng explains how ordinary black Christians were doing this.

As members of a people whose story of pain, fears and hopes has been suppressed, they are enabled, by their physical and psychological scars, together with the analytical tools they have chosen, to discover the suppressed and forgotten stories of the weak and the poor of the Bible. These seem, according to them, to be the stories wherein God is identifying with the forgotten and the weak and is actively retrieving them from the margins of the social world. It is through these stories that God the creator of humans is manifested as the God of the oppressed and accepted as such. This creator God acts incarnately in Jesus to end the rampant enmity in creation and restore real humanity to people. Only the reading of these stories of the downtrodden God among the downtrodden of this world strengthens the tormented faith of the oppressed of our time, as well as enhancing the quality of their commitment to the physical struggle for liberation. This discovery constitutes the liberation of the Bible from the clutches of the dominant in the Christian fold who impose the stories that justify their victories onto the oppressed.¹⁷

In the CBS process, once people have worked on the Bible on their own and have drawn from their life-experiences, they are enabled to own the Bible as their book or weapon with which they can fight oppression.

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Mission *in* and *through* the Bible: Methods and Strategies

Given the rise of secularization on the one hand and the way the Bible is misused in Christian fundamentalism on the other, there is a need for us to search for redemptive ways of reading the Bible in mission. Fundamentalism manifests itself through the propagation of prosperity

¹⁴ West, *Academy of the Poor*, 87.

¹⁵ Mofokeng, 'Black Christians', 40.

¹⁶ West, *Academy of the Poor*, 88.

¹⁷ Mofokeng, 'Black Christians', 41.

theology and gospel by the so-called Bible-centred movements which in many ways takes us back to the era when the Bible was used for the benefit of a few whilst exploiting the majority. Both secularization and fundamentalism compel us to understand the role of the Bible in mission in a new perspective. It means viewing the re-reading and interpretation of the Bible as mission. It means that the liberated Bible has a mission to fulfil, which is the de-education and re-education of the masses that have been given oppressive messages from the Bible by Christian fundamentalists. It also means that society has to be helped to understand the other side of the message of the Bible, which is the life-giving one rather than the one that manipulates and oppresses. In the course of doing mission, this requires us to look for texts in the Bible that empower people, and to be suspicious of all the texts that may disempower people in the process. It means, in our approaching communities with the Bible, being fully aware and open about its limitations rather than giving the impression that it is a perfect word of God. As Tutu's story has told us, we need to be open about the fact that the Bible was once used for disempowerment and oppression in South Africa, and that it is still able to be used in that way. What matters is making the choice to use it for life rather than for destruction. This requires us to understand the use of the Bible in the church as a moment of education. I have argued elsewhere that:

The goal of Christian education is personal *and* social transformation. If people are to grow in their faith and live out that faith in the world, then knowledge is important. As transformed people begin to live holy lives, they will see that society also needs to be transformed and hence they will engage in the processes of social transformation. Education aims at the holiness of the people, which in turn will shape their morality. Viewed from the perspective of the Christian Educators, education is for both mission and social transformation. CBS includes adult and civic education. In this case it is not simply about educating people to know more about the church. It is meant to help people understand the church, the world and life in general. It promotes the idea that the Bible should address a variety of issues that concern people as Christians, citizens impacted by other issues such as politics and the economy. This method of doing mission has sought to expand the focus of mission and the role of the Bible. It is no longer about expanding churches and pointing people to the *maran atha* (second coming of Christ) but covers the need for people to experience the presence of Christ in the here and now.¹⁸

It becomes crucial then that we use methods of reading the Bible that are both critical and contextual so that we do not fall to the trap of using the Bible in ways that are not liberating. Sarojini Nadar has noted that 'Methods to read the Bible that are more liberating are critical and crucial because they bridges the gap between evangelistic and liberationist

¹⁸ Simangaliso Kumalo, *From Sheep to Shepherds: Educating for Social Transformation in the African Church* (Berlin: Lambert Publishers, 2011).

approaches to mission.¹⁹ In fact, since the time of canonization of the scripture in the fourth century, the Bible was taken to be without error. To avoid scrutiny of the Bible, it was removed from the access of ordinary people. Biblical interpretation was the preserve of the learned priest. If an individual questioned the Bible, the crime was punishable by death especially burning at a stake. If an individual saw something wrong in the text, he or she was supposed to believe that there was something wrong with his or her intellect and not the Bible, according to the principle of *interlectum sacrificum*, meaning 'sacrifice your intellect'. This only came to an end with the rise of biblical criticism on the eve of the Reformation. The focus then was on the sources, form and editorial criticism of the Bible. All these methodologies fall under historical criticism but the much-needed criticism of our time is anchored in a post-colonial framework – hence the theme of liberation *in and through* the Bible.

Doing CBS is crucial because it enables us to liberate the Bible from our preconceived ideas of its message, thereby enabling it to speak its own message to us. West observed that re-reading the Bible using critical methods enables 'God to speak to us'. He observed that:

The Bible is clearly one of the primary ways in which God speaks to us; but we often cannot hear what God is saying because we think we know what the Bible says. We have domesticated the Bible; we have tamed it. If we are to hear God speaking into our South African context in these days then we must be willing to return to the Bible with open ears, eyes, and hearts.²⁰

In the context of the Contextual Bible Study there are two groups of people – those who read the Bible because it nourishes their faith and gives them hope, and trained readers who conduct Bible studies. Gerald West has referred to the first group as ordinary readers and the second as trained readers. The first group benefits from the ministry of the Bible as they read it on their own because it gives them hope. For them, the Bible is forever in mission in their lives, with or without the preacher or trained readers to interpret it for them. For the second group (trained readers) the Bible is a tool to carry their mission of liberation and transformation to people, so that they may have 'life in its fullness'.²¹ For this group to carry out its mandate they need the Bible, not only because of its message but also because they are aware that people take it more seriously than any other ideology. People believe in the word of God and its promise for the kingdom of God. Therefore, it makes sense that those who are committed to mission need to do it with and through Bible, for then their work is likely to be welcomed by people

¹⁹ Sarojini Nadar, 'The Bible In and For Mission' in D. Van de Water (ed), *Postcolonial Mission: Power and Partnerships in World Christianity* (London: Saphor Press, 2011), 143.

²⁰ West, *Contextual Bible Study*, 7.

²¹ Jn 10:10.

Contextual Bible Study recognizes that to the African people, the Bible is a central book and has been so since before the colonial era. It has influenced and shaped African belief systems and worldviews.²² It is disingenuous, therefore, for people to claim to still have a pure African culture because African culture has been influenced by both the explicit and implicit teachings of the Bible from Sunday Schools, pulpits, weddings, funerals and so on. Linked to this is the fact that people themselves have shaped and influenced the Bible. West observes that:

Not only has the Bible been a significant text in Africa, but Africa has also had a significant impact on the Bible. There is a significant African presence and influence in the Bible!²³

Therefore, using the Bible in mission means one is utilizing the asset that people already have. However, this tool has been damaged over the years and needs to be sharpened in order to bring about a liberating message. The Bible is no longer the white men's book brought to domesticate people's minds, but rather it is the 'African' people's book which, like most African resources, needs to be polished, sharpened and then put to good use for the benefit of the people. The difference now is that we have people trained in the critical and contextual use of the Bible who will ensure that it does not impose colonial and western messages but rather unveil and rediscover relevant liberating messages from the African context and experience.

The main goal of Contextual Bible Study is to bring about individual and social transformation. When biblical texts are explored during Bible studies, problematic texts are discussed and probing questions are asked, bringing about new perspectives. This leads to the development of knowledge, insights and theories which are then put into practice, leading to situations that are transformed; people's lives and their social conditions are changed. This happens through the process of raising issues of concern, raising consciousness around those issues, and maximizing knowledge and participation in addressing them in the light of the Bible.

Content: Education is a Hermeneutical Task

Contextual Bible Study interprets the Bible in the light of people's experiences, life, struggles and joys in the community. For the Biblical message to be good news to people, we need to find this in the context of discussion and shared-learning. All participants have to share their understanding of the text and the way in which it speaks to our life situations. We also need to go beyond the personal level by looking at the broader context, with its dynamics that impact on people's lives and shape their behaviour. We need to understand what is going on in that context.

²² West, *Contextual Bible Study*, 61.

²³ West, *Contextual Bible Study*, 61.

Context refers to ‘the settings, circumstances and situations within which a particular event or happening occur’.²⁴ However there is word of caution that we need to heed. Context has its limits, as Lamin Sanneh has observed:

We should by this method be able to avoid the pitfalls of theological contextualization in which ‘context’ determines what we value and do not value in religion. Context is not passive but comes preloaded with its own biases, ready to contest whatever claims it encounters. Contexts after all are constructed strategies. As such, a context-sensitive approach should be responsive without being naïve.²⁵

For us to understand the way context impacts people’s lives, Contextual Bible Study has to take into account the stories of the people. People’s stories are important, as they deal with their pasts and their dreams about their future. Anne Wimberly expresses this well in her book, *Soul Stories*. She says that,

Throughout every generation, stories reveal the very lives persons live and the lives which they hope. Stories reveal person’s yearning for God’s liberating presence and activity in their lives. And they reveal persons’ yearning for meaning and purpose in life. Stories also reveal God’s concrete presence and action in person’s lives and person’s responses to God.²⁶

Once the text has been explored and brought together with the life-stories of the participants, a new message that liberates and transforms people’s lives emerges. This cannot happen in a context of preaching where the Bible is handled by one person who attempts to impose his or her view on the people, as we have seen from the train and bus preachers that I referred to in the earlier discussions.

Contextual Bible Studies ensure that knowledge of the Biblical message is not only generated through the exploration of context but rather it also has a commitment to generate the relevant message of the text from *below*. By *below* we mean from the people who are, one way or another, beneficiaries of the mission activities but are usually excluded from the epistemological processes. These are the ordinary people who are usually participants and recipients of mission. They are seen as the objects of mission not the drivers and subjects of mission. They are regarded as consumers of mission that has been prepared somewhere else, on their behalf and for their benefit, by other people. Yet these are the people in whose name mission is carried out, those to whom the Bible is brought, and on whose behalf donations are raised and church structures built. Not only are these ordinary people invisible much of the time, but their knowledge

²⁴ K Tye, *The Basics of Christian Education* (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 30.

²⁵ Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity: The Gospel beyond the West* (Michigan: Grand Rapids: 2003), 5.

²⁶ A Wimberly, *Soul Stores: African American Christian Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press 1994), 38.

and practices, as well as their wisdom and experience, are also largely invisible and undervalued.

As a process through which to discuss particular texts of the Bible, Contextual Bible Study emphasizes a dialogical approach rather than an anti-dialogical approach. This approach recognizes that when people are involved in a dialogue, they share insights to create shared understanding of the text. The Bible study is usually conducted by someone who has been trained as a facilitator and has theological training. CBS encourages questions from the socio-historical context of the text to emerge for further exploration in the discussion. All participants are encouraged to talk and share their views of the text. Participation and action demonstrate the central principle of this method. It is through doing rather than passive listening that people learn about the text and make it work for their context. Below I demonstrate an example of a Contextual Bible Study using 1 Samuel 8:1-22 (NRSV).

The Contextual Bible Study is constructed around five questions, three with their own sub-questions. The text which is chosen by the participants is read in plenary then they disperse into groups where the questions are discussed. When they get into their groups this is what they are asked to do:²⁷

- Tell the story in your own words; begin with ‘once upon a time’;
- What are the themes of this text?
- Who are the main characters?
- What are the people’s demands to Samuel?
- Why do they want a king of their own?
- What is Samuel’s response to them?
- What is God’s response to them?
- How do they respond to God?
- Application of the text:
 - Do we have leaders like Samuel in our context today? Who are they and how do they challenge our idea of mission?
 - Do we have people like the Israelites in our contexts today? Who are they and how do they challenge our ideas of mission?
 - Do we have kings like the ones were described by God in our context today? Who are they and how do they challenge our idea of mission?
 - Who are the sons and daughters who have been taken from their parents as wives and workers in the King’s field who needs saving today? Whose fields and other assets or rights have been taken by the rulers in our context today?

²⁷ I am indebted to my colleague Sarojini Nadar for the framing of this question and the outline. For her article see Nadar, ‘The Bible In and For Mission’, 151.

- What has God's response to the request of the Israelites taught us about God's mission in the world today?
- Action plan:
 - What action are you going to take in response to this Bible study?
 - Are there any resources available for what you are going to do?
 - Who will do what and how are they going to do it?
 - When are they to report?
 - When are we going to evaluate the action taken?

Examination of the theological insights concerning mission that are drawn from this Bible Study can help to clarify our theological motivations for the mission of the church.

Mission as Democracy Building

One of the insights that can be drawn from the above text is that Samuel, God and the people are not only deliberating on spiritual issues, e.g. sacrifices, temples and worship, but they are deliberating about issues of governance and leadership. We discover that this community was concerned about life in a holistic way; God was not unconcerned about their political issues. Rather God and Samuel were concerned about both their spiritual and political lives. A number of political theologians have presented arguments for the role of Bible in the building of democracy and good governance.²⁸ From reading this text we discover the political concerns in the Bible, thus making it difficult for us to ignore that political issues are a concern of the Bible. Richard Bauckham observed that:

It is not so easy to be non-political as people think. The difference between the testaments might be better expressed in terms of a difference of political context. Much of the Old Testament is addressed to a people of God which was a political entity and for much of its history had at least some degree of political autonomy.²⁹

In this text, God depicts how the political leaders that the people were asking for would oppress them. The Israelites were tired of being led by an unseen God. They wanted to be like other nations with a visible political leader who was going to lead their armies to war, walk in front of them, and satisfy their feelings of nationalism. However, God tells them what the king will do; he will suppress the Israelites, take their freedom away and that of their children. He will also take away their resources, such as their land.

²⁸ Obery Hendricks, *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They have been Corrupted* (New York: Doubleday Publishers, 2006).

²⁹ Richard Bauckham, *The Bible in Politics: How to Read the Bible Politically* (London: SPCK, 1989), 3.

God's predictions are confirmed when one looks at the kind of political leaders we have today in Africa, leaders who are self-enriching and plunge their countries into war. War is fought in the mountains and valleys of DRC Congo, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Somalia and many other African countries today. Some leaders are enriching themselves whilst their people suffer in poverty. Two cases at hand are the situation in Zimbabwe and Swaziland, where the leaders have plundered the economy for the benefit of their immediate families and cronies, to the detriment of their nations. Over four million Zimbabweans have been displaced in their search for economic survival. Swaziland has been ripped of its financial resources by the king, so that recently it has been borrowing money to the tune of ten billion rand in order to save the government from total collapse. The leaders of both Zimbabwe and Swaziland are said to be richer than their countries. Unfortunately, churches continue to read and preach Bible texts that support and bless these leaders instead of texts like 1 Samuel that expose their acts of injustice.

Mission as Conscientization and Awakening

In the 1 Samuel story, Samuel is making people aware of the benefits of being ruled by God. God allows the people the freedom to choose the form of governance they want. We see them abandoning the rule by God and turning to embrace the monarchy. Of course Samuel was not comfortable with the appointment of a king because he would compete with the house of priests which he (Samuel belonged to) for the people's loyalty. However, the people do not concern themselves with the reasoning and caution given to them by God, warning that they need to be vigilant once they have a king. Mission, in this light, has to play the role of conscientising people about God's view of governance. From the text it can be understood that in God's household there are principles such as equality, justice, freedom and choice. As part of its mission then, the church has an obligation to conscientise people to challenge their governments to uphold to the basic principles of democracy, for these are consistent with the nature of governance in God's household.

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'Let Freedom Reign': The Agency of Christian Citizens in the Development of Good Governance

Finally, the story in 1 Samuel invites us to seek ways to embark on the mission of the church in the arena of politics. There has been a tendency to dichotomize politics and preaching. Politics is seen as something that is unholy and concentrates on secular issues, whilst preaching is understood to be about the holy things of the church and preparing the way to the kingdom of God. What we have observed in almost all African countries is that during the struggle against colonization, some of the churches played a

pivotal role in bringing about the freedom of the oppressed people. Soon after independence, the new political leaders began to push church leaders to the margins of society, calling them to concentrate on what they are equipped to do, which is nurturing the spiritual life of the nation and 'leave politics to the politicians'.³⁰ As a result, the church, which was supposed to be the conscience of the nation, moved into focusing on its ecclesiastical issues and left social issues in the hands of politicians to the detriment of democracy and all the people. This resulted in the end of the prophetic movement of the church in most African countries. Using the Bible for or in mission in Africa today requires the rediscovery of texts that would unlock and raise up the church's prophetic movement, in order to free the continent from the trappings of bad governance, economic exploitation and loss of life. As Mayers writes,

One challenge for Christians is to organize nonviolent democratic movements for peace and justice in such a way that the resentments and injustices on which armed opponents thrive might be blotted out. These movements must be local, diverse, in communication with one another but not hierarchically organized.³¹

Only when this is done can we agree with Desmond Tutu that we are using the Bible to get back our land and all that was taken away from us, including our freedom and human dignity.

Conclusion

In conclusion I have argued in this paper that in a rapidly secularizing world with a proliferation of Christian fundamentalism, there is a need for the Bible to be used for mission through the application of critical methods of interpretation. It must be allowed to direct both the goal and content of mission. By drawing from the insights raised from the story of God and people's request for a king, we are challenged to understand the mission of the church in a particular way. First, we have seen that the mission of the church needs to be holistic and concern itself with those aspects of life that have long been neglected, such as politics. Second, the story challenges us to use the Bible for reflection and social analysis so that we can be conscientized to understand the dynamics of our society. Third, as part of the mission of the church, the story has called us to participate in the development of democracy and just rule in our society, rather than seeing these as unconnected from the church.

³⁰ President Jacob Zuma quoted in Jeremy Gordin, *Zuma: A Biography* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2006), 76.

³¹ Max. A. Mayers, 'Hermeneutics in the American Empire. Toward an Imperialist Theology', in Cynthia Kettridge, Ellen Aitken and Jonathon Draper (eds), *The Bible in the Public Square: Reading the Signs of the Times* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 93.

THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR MISSION FROM A MIDDLE EASTERN EXPERIENCE

Mary Mikhael

Abstract in Arabic

المبادئ الكتابية للإرسالية المسيحية

تأسست الكنيسة المسيحية على إيمانها بيسوع المسيح - الله المتجسد - عمله وتعليمه، صلبه وقيامته. ولقد كان الشرق الأوسط، فلسطين بالتحديد، مسرح بداية المسيحية ومنه انطلقت الإرسالية المسيحية إلى العالم.

خلال وجوده بالجسد أسس يسوع المسيح جماعة صغيرة حملها مبادئه وأرسلها حاملة الأخبار السارة إلى العالم. وإطاعة لهذه الوكالة سريعاً ما انتشرت المسيحية خارج فلسطين إلى انطاكية في سورية والمناطق المجاورة. ومع دعوة الرسول بولس كما نقرأ في أعمال الرسل انتشرت المسيحية خارج الشرق الأوسط إلى آسيا الصغرى، قبرص، ودول أوروبية مثل فيلبي، أفسس، كوثوس ورومية عاصمة الامبراطورية الرومانية.

ويبدو واضحاً من سجل العهدين القديم والجديد أنه ومنذ بداية الخليقة إن الله الخالق بمحبته وعنايته أراد أن يكون في علاقة مميزة وشركة محبة وتواصل دائم مع الإنسان الذي كان تاج الخليقة. سقط الإنسان في الخطيئة مكرماً مع آدم وحواء، وخرج بالتالي من دائرة الشركة المفتوحة مع الخالق في جنة عدن. لكن الله استمر في اظهار محبته وعنايته وإرادته في تجديد العلاقة مع الإنسان. وكان ظهور الانبياء في العائلة الأبراهيمية تجديداً لإرادة الله المحبة في عودة الإنسان إلى حالة الشركة المباركة.

وفي الأيام الأخيرة كما يقول كاتب رسالة العبرانيين تكلم الله بصورة جديدة في ابنه الذي جعله وارثاً لكل شيء - مظهراً محبة عجيبة في كل ما عمل يسوع المسيح وعلم وفي صلبه فداءً عن كل العالم، وقيامته المجيدة من أجل حياة العالم. وإرساله للروح القدس الذي يستمر بإعطائه قوة على حياة البر والقداسة، والفرصة الجديدة للحياة والشركة مع الله

الخالق في يسوع المسيح.

يسوع المسيح الفادي والمخلص اعد الطريق لعودة الإنسان إلى حياة الرجاء والإيمان والشركة المقدسة من جديد، وعلم ودرب تلاميذه ورسله على حمل رسالة المحبة والرجاء والدعوة للإيمان به فادياً ومخلصاً محباً والحصول بواسطة هذا الإيمان على رجاء الحياة الأبدية. إرسالية الكنيسة المسيحية هي سبب وجود الكنيسة وهي رسالة لعالم اليوم. رسالة شفاء وشعب ورفعة لكل مريض وجائع ومهمش. رسالة عدل وسلام وجهاد ضد كل

خطية وظلم وتكبر. منذ خلقه للإنسان أراد الله المحب أن تكون حياة الإنسان حياة إيمان وشكر وعبادة وشركة مقدسة ومصالحة بين الإنسان والله وبين الإنسان ونفسه وبينه وبين كل إنسان آخر. رسالة الكنيسة استمرار لرسالة الله المحب في الخلق مكتملة فيما عمل يسوع المسيح وفي قيامته المجيدة. هذه هي رسالة الكنيسة عبر الأزمنة وإلى أن يأتي المسيح ثانية.

إرسالية الكنيسة المسيحية هي استمرار لإرسالية الله من أجل حياة الإنسان وخلصه. وهذه هي شهادة الكتاب المقدس بعهديه القديم والجديد.

ماري مخائيل

Introduction

The Christian church established by the crucified and Risen Christ made its first steps toward mission in the Middle East, and out of it to the world. The early church understood its mission as witness to Jesus, starting in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and moving to the farthest corners of the earth (Acts. 1:8). The church in the Middle East today is of special significance and has an important responsibility to continue that mission. For this mission we need to understand the Biblical mandate. We also need to understand our context which includes an appreciation of history. How much resonance we find between the present and the past may be a point of debate. However, without understanding the past we will have no right to critique the present. This chapter will provide a broad Biblical picture of the ways in which God has been acting in mission since creation, focusing on the mission of Jesus and the mission of the early church, in order to discover how we are directed in mission today. It will link the missional commands directed at all Christians throughout the world to the work of the church in the Middle East. For two millennia the church of the Middle East has suffered oppressions brought about by continuous occupations by one power or another. In the seventh century AD Islam developed as a political and religious force in the region and many Christians adopted Islam as their

religion in order to be able to participate in the politics of the new Islamic empire. For centuries the church had limited involvement in the decision-making processes affecting social life. As a result, the church became more preoccupied with its own survival than its mission to society. Today the church is rediscovering Christ's mission as a consequence of the modern missionary movement.

Go, Do, Send, Love

In the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus says, 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you'. We find in the command to 'go' a church on the move. But also a church on the 'do' as well. In John 20:21 we also find a church that is sent. On the evening of the resurrection day the Lord said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father sent me, so I send you.' His disciples are sent into the world to witness to the crucified but Risen Lord. This includes teaching to observe the commandments of Jesus. In a short chapter it is not possible to collect the commandments of Jesus altogether. However, in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7), one finds many commands and 'Love one another; as I have loved you' (Jn 13:34), the new commandment found in John's Gospel is one of central importance. The New Testament mission and call are directed to the church as a community of disciples charged and empowered all together, to go, do, send and love in order that the Good News of Jesus Christ – God incarnate – is shared in the world.

As I shall show, in the whole story of God's acts in the history of humanity, from the creation, to the call of Abraham, and through all the prophets until '... these last days he [God] has spoken to us by a son, whom he appointed the heir of all things...' (Heb 1:2a). God acts and continues to act. The Matthean Great Commission, 'go and do', the Johannine sending and instruction to love, and the Lucan description of what Jesus came to do, all reaffirm that the mission of God is a continuing process. The early church in the Acts of the Apostles saw itself in this process: in mission by being and by doing. Thus the church discovered its biblical foundation for its mission and learnt that by its nature and calling, the church is to be in mission.

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'Mission is What the Bible is All About'

While mission is a New Testament truth, the whole Bible tradition tells of a God who is involved with a mission to all humanity. Christopher JH Wright in *The Mission of God* states that, 'Mission is what the Bible is all about'.¹ Wright did not mean to say that we find 'mission' mentioned on

¹ Christopher JH Wright, *The Mission of God* (Nottingham: IVP, 2006), 29.

every page of the Bible; rather he based his claim on Jesus' assertion that he came to fulfill the Law of Moses, the Prophets and Psalms (Lk 24:44-49). God's mission is apparent in the pages of the Old Testament.

The creator God, according to Genesis, created the world out of his own will. God created humanity as the crown of creation and established a special relationship with humans. They are inspired by the breath of God and given the mission of caring for creation. Humans lived in the presence of God in the Garden of Eden. They could hear God's voice, and be in open communication with God. God gave them instructions and expected obedience. These human beings, created in the image of God, had the capability to make choices and regretfully disobeyed God, resulting in their loss of the privilege of being in an open communication with God and causing their dismissal from God's presence. They failed in this mission but God did not fail. God continued the mission of caring, loving, and sustaining fallen humanity. God has a continuous mission to restore humanity and transform it to the original state of being the community where God is pleased to participate in its life.

Through God's love and God's call to Abraham and special covenant with him, God made a new people with a mission to all the nations. They were to become a blessing and a light so that, 'Then will the glory of the Lord be revealed and all mankind together will see it...' (Is 40:5). This new people through Abraham were to be agents of God's mission into the world. Thus, through most of the entire story of the Old Testament humanity knew God as the loving, caring and protecting God who continued to relate to humanity through individuals who were in faithful relationship with him, particularly those we call the prophets. The prophets in a variety of ways were called to participate in the salvific mission of God. They conveyed God's will to heal and transform humanity. Even though humanity had lost its original state, God, through his grace, intended to continue in relation with the whole humanity to establish his redeeming purpose, and when the time was fulfilled God chose to act directly through Jesus Christ, God's complete and perfect mission to redeem the world. In Jesus' death and resurrection God made salvation a reality for all who believe the good news of the Gospel, and God chose to do it within the Abrahamic community.

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Christ's Mission

The whole story of God's acts in the history of humanity, as the Old Testament records it points towards what Christ came to do. Jesus fulfills the Law, Prophets and Psalms in his life, suffering, death and resurrection. This must be communicated to all in all ages. As is said in volume II of the Edinburgh series, 'Witnessing to Christ today implies that, our Christian

mission relates to Christ's own mission'.² It is of secondary importance that we find a 'variety of approaches to interpret [Biblical] foundations for mission'³ – we are commanded by Jesus to act. Christian mission is the mission of Christ.

Simply and straight forwardly, Jesus outlined his own mission which he expected the church to assume as its own once he returned to the Father. He came to preach the gospel to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, to recover sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, and to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord (Lk 4:18, 19). As Jesus quotes Isaiah he is indicating that God is continuing his mission of old. In all that Jesus did and commanded during his ministry, he was preparing the disciples to understand that he was God incarnate who is concerned for the world to be transformed. It is a mission where God intends to rescue and redeem a fallen humanity through what God has done in Jesus Christ.

Through Jesus Christ, the crucified but Risen Lord, God brought to being the church with the privilege of participating in his great mission that always pointed to the fullness of time when Jesus will seal God's mission with his blood. In Jesus' name repentance bringing forgiveness of sins must be proclaimed. This proclamation was to begin once the church received power from above through the Holy Spirit: 'You will receive power... and you will bear witness for me.' (Acts 1:8), '... teaching them to observe all I commanded you...' (Mt 28: 20). Thus, when one speaks about Christian mission, the reference is to the participation of the church in this movement of God toward humanity.

The Mission of the Early Church

The Acts of the Apostles tell how the early church practiced its mission. It is surely the story of the Christian mission par excellence. Reading Acts one sees different approaches to mission by the twelve disciples which demonstrates that even the disciples had developed their understanding and ways of carrying out their commission. The Edinburgh 2010 conference had a lot to say in this regard.⁴ The twelve apostles started their witness among their own community in Jerusalem and were ready to move on regardless of all threats and the actual danger they faced.

The small church received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and thus had all the needed power to proclaim that the crucified Jesus is Lord. It put aside all its fears of violent persecution (Acts 2). The proclamation began in Jerusalem, exactly where Jesus was crucified. On the very day of

² Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim, *Edinburgh 2010: Witnessing to Christ Today* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010), 11.

³ Balia and Kim, *Witnessing to Christ*, 17-18.

⁴ For example, the discussion on 'Forms of Missionary Engagement'. See Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson, *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011), 150-7, for notes on the discussion.

receiving the promised power, Peter, a fisherman, preached to a crowd, quoting from the prophet Joel that God will pour his Spirit on all mankind (Acts 2:17). On the day of Pentecost there were people 'from every nation under heaven' (Acts 2), who heard the witness of Peter and saw miracles from above and their hearts were touched. Those, one can assume, were the first missionaries outside Judea once they went back to their homes far away with the message of the salvation brought about by Jesus of Nazareth.

Luke understood the universality of the mission of Jesus. He recognised that God has always been doing mission, through the outpouring of God's self into the world. Luke was aware of the limited view of some Christian Jews: that the Messiah shall be the saviour only for the Jews so Luke records experiences such as Peter's vision in Acts (10:9-15) when he was told not to call profane what God counts clean. The vision transformed his prior belief that Jews are forbidden to associate with anyone of another race. As a result Peter did not hesitate to go and witness to the Gentile centurion, Cornelius, and tell him all about Jesus. In the house of Cornelius Peter learned yet another lesson – that 'God has no favourites', as he witnessed the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles present. Later when, back in Jerusalem, some Christians took issue with him for visiting the uncircumcised (Acts 11) he was able to defend his action saying: 'God gave them no less a gift than he gave us... How could I stand in God's way?' (Acts 11:17). So the Christian mission is a mission to all, Jews and Gentiles, a mission at home and beyond, here and there, near and far. The mission of the disciples was to continue just as the prophets of the past who had carried the will of God to their people.

Paul the apostle, who 'belonged to the strictest group of our religion' (Acts 26:5), who was engraved with the traditions of his fathers, and who 'thought it my duty to work actively against the name of Jesus of Nazareth' (Acts 26:9) described himself as an apostle of Jesus to the Gentiles after encountering the Risen Jesus. The conversion of Paul and his mission reaffirmed that the horizon for witness expanded far beyond Judea and Samaria. During his trial before Agrippa (Acts 26:6-7) Paul refers to the 'hope of the fathers' being what he found in Jesus of Nazareth. Paul was called to witness to rulers and kings of the Gentiles. He is considered a champion of Christian mission beyond any geographical borders, national or ethnic communities. Acts concludes with the imprisoned Paul continuing his mission and reaching Rome, the centre of the Empire.

Christianity was born in the Middle East on the day of Pentecost which marked the involvement of the church in the mission of God. The church is not only an instrument of proclamation of the good news but also must be a visible and concrete demonstration of the good news of the gospel. God's mission through the Disciples spread to different parts of the Middle East very quickly. Churches in what are now known as Syria and Lebanon were established; Syrian Antioch became the major Christian centre after Jerusalem. The church in Antioch commissioned Paul and sent missionaries

to Asia Minor, Europe and other parts of the known world (Acts 15). The early church understood its reason for being as to teach and preach Jesus Christ Lord of all, celebrating his memory through the Eucharist. It saw itself as a *koinonia*, a community of fellowship, of faith, hope and love (Acts 2) and soon it recognized that it has a mission of a *diakonia*, a serving community (Acts 7). It shared its resources and gave a taste of God's Kingdom. Yet the early church knew that its teaching, preaching, and service was to extend to the whole human family. This is how we must understand our mission today. Our mission as the church of today finds its archetypal mission in that of the early church of Acts of the Apostles.

Bible and Mission in the Middle East: The Past

Even though the whole world grows more complicated day by day, we believe that the Middle East supersedes the world in its complexity. The Middle East is the cradle of the three monotheistic religions. Each claims a mission to the world and often asserts superiority. Political conflict and instability has been particularly acute in the last sixty years or so. The conflict finds its roots in religious claims specially related to land. Hostility has been growing daily and preaching the gospel to promote faith in Jesus Christ for many sounds offensive. Should the church continue to be in mission in the Middle East? Does it have a mission in this multi-religious, and politically troubled society?

At the Edinburgh 1910 mission conference, missionaries of the Protestant traditions committed themselves to evangelize the world, hoping to bring all to faith in Christ. Missionaries from European and North American Protestant churches who came to the Middle East almost a century prior to Edinburgh 1910 had a similar goal. They intended to proclaim Christ to the Jews first, and then to the Muslims and the Eastern Christians. 'They considered themselves called by God to evangelize... [and] also believed that all people... followers of other religions and all non-evangelical Christians all over the world, were in need of experiencing that "evangelical spiritual revival" which they had experienced in their own countries.'⁵ Some 25 years later in many parts of Lebanon, Syria and Turkey those attracted to the Protestant faith began to be known as communities and were accepted by the Ottoman system within its 'millet'⁶ system in 1850.

The missionary movement in the Middle East was not popular. Local churches considered it a threat because many of their own communicants

⁵ Habib Badr, 'Evangelical Mission and Churches in the Middle East', in Habib Badr (ed), *Christianity: A History in the Middle East* (Beirut: Middle East Council of Churches, 2005), 712.

⁶ Millet is the name of non-Muslim religions in Islamic states and the laws which govern their existence and restrict their involvement in public life. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/382871/millet>.

joined the new movement and adopted its new teaching, thought, piety, and even its culture. Missionaries shifted their strategy from preaching to focus on a wider mission which included education and social work. They hoped that through education and other services they would have the opportunity to make Christ's love known to all.

I was present in Edinburgh 2010 and co-convened the discussion theme on 'Mission and Power'.⁷ I also read the corresponding chapter in the second volume of the Edinburgh 2010 series.⁸ In both, stories were told of missionaries oppressing of local communities, despising their cultures, separating children from their families and gaining support of occupying armies and thus behaving in similar a manner to the colonial powers. Similar accounts exist in the Middle East and the pain caused must be acknowledged. Yet missionaries were also creating positive change in society and helping in the development of those communities. Their creation of new Christian communities and their focus on carrying Christ's mission to all nations was a reality that cannot be denied.

In the Middle East most people recognise that the missionary movement gave energy and direction to a renaissance both in church and in society. There was a need in the local churches to shake off the dust of the past and get out of the shells that had imprisoned them for centuries. The missionary zeal to spread the gospel and make the Bible available for all was significant. In this way, they believed, people could know Christ's salvation and follow his commands. One major translation of the Bible into Arabic completed in 1864 remains widely used to the present day. For the first time an Arabic printing press was provided to print the Bible, Christian literature, and other educational material – a landmark for leaders and scholars and also for the less educated. The local churches seized upon opportunities promoted by the missionaries: Bible study groups, Sunday schools for children, hymns and music and church choirs all renewed life within local churches. Social services, orphanages, medical care centres, and other services provided by missionaries were taken over by local churches as well.

There was a close connection between Biblical literacy and wider education and it contributed to the whole society. Schools were found in every area the missionaries were present and they became the instruments of change. The first schools for women started by the missionaries. Some of those schools turned into high level colleges and universities, such as the American University of Beirut and the Beirut College for Women which is now a university, and the first institution for Theological Education in the entire Middle East, now known as the Near East School of Theology. Care for the well-being of society was also seen in missionary hospitals and

⁷ Kim and Anderson (eds), *Mission Today and Tomorrow*, 142-149 for notes on the discussion.

⁸ Balia and Kim, *Witnessing to Christ*, 86-115.

medical services. The nineteenth century missionaries were willing to be sent, to go and do and love. They followed the biblical foundation of Christian mission in this multi-faith society, understanding that mission is for the sake of others, so that they may have life and have it abundantly (Jn 10:10).

Bible and Mission in the Middle East: The Future

What must our future mission be in the Middle East? I ask this question when the political future of the region seems particularly precarious, offering both hope and uncertainty to millions. Yet I write in the conviction that the church must continue God's mission in the Middle East, and everywhere else for that matter. The church is present to be an agent of transformation in God's world. Despite all the forces of darkness the church has to be the light of Christ. When the light shines it brings freedom, deliverance and hope in ways we never expect.

Luke 4:18-19 gives the directions and outlines what the church must be and do. It share good news with all: God's love in Jesus Christ excludes no-one. The church must be voice for the voiceless, and strive passionately for justice. The church must show love in action. It must give hope in all it does most precisely in places where hopelessness prevails. Our mission today must be our expression of empathy for the needy, working for peace and the well-being of all people. It must give freedom for the bound, homes for the refugees, abundant life for the marginalized. Love, justice, and hope, as all represented in Jesus' life and work, are to be what the church strives to promote among people. When we are able to catch the spirit of Jesus then we are in mission. When the church catches the spirit of Jesus it will have no alternative but to engage in actions which challenge the evil of society. Christian mission finds its foundation in all God has done and continues to do for the life of the world. We respond by going, doing and loving.

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PART THREE

**EXPLORING THEOLOGY
AS A FOUNDATION
FOR MISSION**

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CHRISTOLOGY AND TRINITY IN MISSION

Damon W. K. So

Abstract in Chinese

本章探討對三一論不平衡的理解如何導致教會生活和宣教方面各種不同的實際問題，並且提出當宣告耶穌從出生到復活的故事時，應該要從耶穌透過聖靈與天父之交通和關係的觀點來傳講，本章又提出三一論是基督徒宣教的基礎、途徑及目標，這乃是從三個角度來看上帝的宣教（*missio Dei*）。

Introduction

While the understanding of God as Trinity has been central in Orthodox theology in the East, the same cannot be said for Western theology. Karl Rahner wrote the following memorable comment in his book, *The Trinity*, in 1970:

Despite their orthodox confession of the Trinity, Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere ‘monotheists’. We must be willing to admit that, would the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged.¹

Rahner’s assessment might well be true in the 1970s but since then there has been a renewed interest in the Trinity in the West. Many books on the Trinity, both at the academic level and the more popular level, have been written in the last few decades. One can verify this by visiting the website of a major bookseller and searching for books with the word ‘Trinity’ in the title. However, the question still remains: how much have these writings been able to filter down to the grassroots level and impact on the understanding and practice of Christian leaders, ordinary lay people and missionaries in the field? Four decades after Rahner’s original comment, it can be amended in the following way;

¹ K Rahner, *The Trinity* (London: Burns and Oates, 1970), 10-11.

Would the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious *practice* could well remain virtually unchanged.

Christian practices at the beginning of the twenty-first century appear to engage little with a Trinitarian understanding of God. The church needs to work out the important implications of her Trinitarian understanding of God both for her life and mission in the world.

This chapter will briefly explore how unbalanced understandings of the Trinity can lead to various kinds of practical problems in the church's life and mission, and seek to address these problems in the hope that the church's practice will faithfully reflect her confession of the Trinity so that the church will reap a rich harvest of blessings from above. The chapter will also propose that the Trinity is the *ground*, the *means* and the *goal* of Christian mission, which is a way of looking at *missio Dei* in a threefold manner.²

Unbalanced Understandings of the Trinity and Their Practical Problems

Before his crucifixion, Jesus prayed in his high priestly prayer in John 17:1-5, 'Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.'

According to Jesus Christ, eternal life is to know the glory of the Father and the Son. In John's gospel, the Son is in dynamic fellowship and unity with the Father through the Spirit (3:34, 14:16-21). Therefore, to know the Father and the Son inevitably or implicitly involves knowing the Holy Spirit in their relationship. This important notion of knowing the Father and

² Concerning the rise of *missio Dei* theology, John Flett, in his *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), has the following interesting point to make. 'The original proposal for a Trinitarian basis entered mainstream thinking at the International Missionary Council (IMC) conference held in 1952 at Willingen, Germany. However, the intellectual origins of this shift are attributed to a lecture Karl Barth delivered twenty years earlier, entitled 'Die Theologie und die Mission in der Gegenwart' (theology and mission in the present situation). This is where, it is argued, Barth initiated the connection between missions and the doctrine of the Trinity' (p.11). However, Flett negates this generally accepted opinion, 'In reality, Barth never once used the term *missio Dei*, never wrote the phrase "God is a missionary God," and never articulated a Trinitarian position of the kind expressed at Willingen. No textual evidence indicates that Barth interacted with the missiological discussions that were engaged with his theology' (p.12). Furthermore he claimed, '... not a single fragment of textual evidence supports the connection between Barth's 1932 lecture and Willingen's Trinitarian developments' (p.15). For further details, see Flett, *The Witness of God*, 123-162.

the Son is not only found in John's gospel but also in Matthew (11:27) and Luke (10:22). If the good news is about the knowledge of God, then in sharing and living the *whole* gospel we ought to present *holistically* the Father *and* the Son in perpetual holy and loving communion *through* the Holy Spirit – i.e., the Trinity – not just one or two persons of the Trinity. Otherwise, leaving one or two persons of the Trinity out will result in a non-holistic gospel with unfortunate long-term consequences, as some readers may discern. The following will (i) look at the individual cases where either the Father, Son or Holy Spirit is neglected and (ii) combine these cases together into different scenarios. For the sake of presentation, the combined scenarios (ii) will be briefly discussed before (i), followed by a return to three examples of the combined scenarios. No attempt will be made to correlate these examples with any specific groups of churches for obvious reasons.

In the first category (or example) of the combined scenario, a church has a strong Christological emphasis with a virtual exclusion of the Father and the Spirit. This can be called Christomonism. In the second category, the Son and the Spirit are maintained in view while the Father is gravely eclipsed. This can be called Christo-Pneumatologicalism. In the third category, the Father and the Son are held in view but the Holy Spirit is neglected. This can be called Binitarianism. In the fourth category, only the Father is emphasised at the expense of the Son and the Spirit. The extreme and heretical form of this is Arianism, which was condemned in the fourth century in the Council of Nicea. In the fifth category, the Father and the Spirit are emphasised at the expense of the Son (e.g., by diluting his divinity). This can be called mysticism or a degraded form of Spirit Christology.³ In the sixth category, only the Spirit is prominent and this can be called Spiritism. In the seventh category, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are treated as one person who appears in different modes. This is called modalism or Sabellianism. In the eighth category, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are treated so distinctly as to neglect their intrinsic (ontological) and dynamic (functional) unity. This is called tritheism. Finally, in the ninth category, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are kept in view as three persons (the threeness) who are equally divine and who are in dynamic holy loving communion (oneness). This is what orthodoxy believes as the Trinity. All the first eight categories fail to conceive properly the divine Trinity and these failures will manifest themselves in the practices of the various churches falling into these categories.

³ See JDG Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1975). However, there is a form of Spirit Christology which maintains the divinity of Jesus, see Damon So, *Jesus' Revelation of His Father: A Narrative-Conceptual Study of the Trinity with Special Reference to Karl Barth* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), 260-61.

Much imbalance in the faith and practice of churches can helpfully be understood as an over-emphasis on one or other of the Persons of the Trinity with a consequent failure to relate fully and freely to the remaining Persons:⁴ ‘...conceptions of the church derived from attention to one person of the Trinity only do tend to give rise to a variety of spiritual ills.’⁵ To gain some understanding of the implications of these imbalances and failures, it is necessary to survey each of the three cases corresponding to each person of the Trinity being neglected or excluded in theology and practice.

The Eclipse of the Fatherhood of God

The obvious consequence of the eclipse of the Father in a church is that the church members will know very little of the Fatherhood of God.⁶ This is contrary to the teaching in the New Testament where we see Jesus calling out to God as Father (*abba*) and teaching his disciples to do the same but using the term, ‘our Father’, instead of Jesus’ unique call, ‘my Father’.⁷ If Christians are supposed to be disciples/followers of Jesus, then we should follow Jesus’ example of calling out to God as Father in the most intimate manner and receive from him his unconditional love and calling in our lives.⁸ If Jesus the Son experienced his Father’s love through the presence of the Holy Spirit (Mt 3:16-17), then his disciples have the greatest privilege to be called God’s beloved children (Jn 1:12) who receive his loving and holy presence through the same Spirit (Rom 5:4). And Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son vividly illustrates to us the unconditionality, the unboundedness, the super-abundance of the Father’s love (Lk 15, especially v.20). If Jesus himself bore a light burden and found rest and peace in his intimate knowledge of his Father (Mt 11:27), even in the context of the consistent tensions with the religious leaders, then we can learn from him to bear a light burden and find rest for our souls (Mt 11:29-30).⁹ Jesus’ relationship with his Father through the Spirit was the very foundation of his whole life and death; it would have been inconceivable to Jesus that those who are supposed to follow him should exclude the notion of God’s Fatherhood in their understanding and practice. As seen in the Sermon on

⁴ The British Council of Churches, *The Forgotten Trinity* (3 parts; London: The British Council of Churches, 1989-91), Part 2 in ‘The Trinity and Our Relationship with God’. See 21-24 for details.

⁵ The British Council of Churches, *The Forgotten Trinity*, Part 1:28-29.

⁶ Thomas Smail, *The Forgotten Father* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1980). This book was addressed to the charismatic Christians in the 1980s.

⁷ Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1967).

⁸ ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased’ is both the Father’s expression of his love to his Son and his calling for his mission in which the Son would serve as the suffering servant. See Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42.

⁹ See So, *Jesus’ Revelation of His Father*, 64-75. See also *The Forgotten Jesus and the Trinity You Never Knew Knew* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 187-96.

the Mount, fulfilling the Kingdom ethics as given there (and thus being his light for the world, Mt 5:14) is extremely demanding, requiring much sacrifice on the part of the citizens of the Kingdom. However, the degree of difficulty is offset by the amazing promises of the Father's providential loving care given in the same sermon (Mt 6:4, 6, 14, 18, 33; 7:11). If the disciples of Jesus wish to live in a radically different manner to the world, i.e., as true citizens of God's Kingdom giving light to the world (Mt 5:14-16, which itself is mission), the foundation of this radical living must be laid in the Father's unconditional and unfailing love (Mt 5: 45-38), which was the very foundation of Jesus' life and mission on earth. No discipleship can be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, and no mission can be meaningfully sustained with long-lasting vitality, apart from the loving Fatherhood of God.

Freedom (or redemption) of God's people is a very prominent biblical theme. How can the disciples of Jesus live in true freedom in the Kingdom of God and become the light to the world? How can they be free from fear, guilt and bondage as Jesus the Son was free? Clearly it is the Son who sets the disciples free (Jn 8:34; Lk 4:18-19) in the power of the Holy Spirit (Lk 4:18; Rom 8:1, 11; 2 Cor 3:17).¹⁰ And this freedom is not the same as the freedom understood by the world. It is founded on the love of God and it is the freedom to serve others and serve God. This freedom is truly enjoyed by the disciples of Jesus when they receive the unconditional love of the Father through the Son in the Spirit. This divine love from above drives out all fears and sets us free to become the kind of persons we are created and meant to be.

God [the Father] is love. Those who live in love live in God, and God in them. ... There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. (1 Jn 4:18)

Our journey towards perfection, or perfect freedom, depends on the Father's love. Paul in Romans linked Christians' enjoying freedom to their sonship to the Father:

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. (Rom 8:14-17)

These notions of freedom in the New Testament were preceded by a similar notion of rest or peace in Jesus' teaching and in his own experience:

¹⁰ See the prominent theme of freedom in Galatians, especially 4:1-7. See also Eph 3:12; Col 1:22; Heb 2:15, 9:15; 1 Pet 2:16; Rev 1:5. The theme of freedom is prominent in the New Testament.

All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Mt 11:27-30)

The notion of the disciples' finding rest and taking a light burden (or easy yoke) is crucially preceded by their knowledge of the Father through the revelation of the Son. This text must not be interpreted only Christologically but also with reference to the Father because the text clearly lays down the knowledge of the Father as the foundation for rest. It has been argued with strong evidence that the rest, the light burden and the easy yoke that Jesus spoke about were in the first instance his own rest in his Father, his light burden ('my burden') and his easy yoke ('my yoke') as he trusted in his Father's loving care.¹¹ He is the archetypal Son who enjoyed the freedom and rest in his Father's love; he who is free can set his disciples free by imparting to them his own unique knowledge of his Father and giving them the right to call out to God '*abba*, Father'. We can link Jesus' own experience of freedom in his Father to his freedom to love others: 'Jesus Christ was a genuinely free human person who, living in his Father's divine unconditional love and therefore living in true freedom, exercised this freedom to love unconditionally from the beginning to the end of his life, all according to his Father's will.'¹²

The disciples of Jesus are to follow him in living in this freedom and exercising this freedom to love others in the church and outside the church. This freedom has to be firmly founded on the loving Fatherhood of God. By eclipsing the Fatherhood of God, a church will by and large forfeit this precious freedom and lapse into all kinds of insecurities and identity problems. If such a church is to become healthy, live radically according Jesus' Kingdom ethics and thereby be the light to the world in mission, she must openly and boldly receive God as the loving Father through the revelatory and reconciling work of the Son who is present to energise her with the his own Spirit, the Spirit of sonship, to call out to the Father, '*abba*'.

In the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15, Jesus deliberately presented the surprising, or even 'scandalous', love of the Father.¹³ God's Fatherly love and compassion should not only be the foundation of our life, security and freedom; it is also integral to the content of the message that we proclaim to the world which is also in need of the same foundation for

¹¹ See So, *Jesus' Revelation of His Father*, 64-75; *The Forgotten Jesus and the Trinity You Never Knew*, 189-91.

¹² So, *The Forgotten Jesus and the Trinity You Never Knew*, 215.

¹³ See Kenneth Bailey, *The Cross and the Prodigal: Luke 15 Through the Eyes of Middle Eastern Peasants* (Downer Grove: IVP, 2005). 'Scandalous' is my interpretation.

life, security and true freedom. This message of course was first given to the church through the revelation of the Son.

The Eclipse of the Son of God

We might assume that Jesus, the Son of God, is not usually eclipsed in the church. After all, he is the founder of the Christian church. However, this assumption needs to be checked against reality. The conservative wing of the church, following the tradition of the Reformation, has long since focussed on the last days of Jesus' life on earth, and his suffering and atoning death. The liberal wing of the church, in sharp contrast and following the tradition of Schleiermacher, has found the life and public ministry of Jesus more appealing than the 'dogma' of the atonement.¹⁴ In addition to this, the conservative wing tends to emphasise the divinity of the Son while the liberal wing tends to emphasise his humanity. Both wings of the church fail to grasp a whole (or holistic) picture of Jesus Christ. These non-holistic pictures of Jesus held by conservative and liberal wings of the church are expressed in the kinds of mission endeavours they are engaged in: the conservatives emphasise proclamation and spiritual salvation while the liberals emphasise social action and physical well-being.¹⁵ Neither practises holistic mission. Fortunately, the idea of holistic mission has been much more firmly put on the global mission agenda since Lausanne 1974 by theologians coming mainly from the developing world (International Fellowship of Mission Theologians).¹⁶ However, the theological root of the bifurcation of mission has to be addressed but this is beyond the scope of this chapter. This root was touched on by NT Wright when he wrote,

The Reformers had very thorough answers to the question 'why did Jesus die?' they did not have nearly such good answers to the question 'why did Jesus live?'... It would not, then, be much of a caricature to say that orthodoxy, as represented by much popular preaching and writing, has had no clear idea of the purpose of Jesus' ministry. For many conservative theologians it would have been sufficient if Jesus had been born of a virgin,

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¹⁴ See D DeVries, *Jesus Christ in the Preaching of Calvin and Schleiermacher* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996). See So, *Jesus' Revelation of His Father*, 161-2.

¹⁵ See Damon So, 'The Missionary Journey of the Son of God into the Far Country', in Brian Woolnough & Wonsuk Ma (eds) *Holistic Mission: God's Plan for God's People* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010), 47-58. See also Damon So, 'The Missionary Journey of the Son of God into the Far Country: A paradigm of the holistic gospel developed from the theology of Karl Barth', *Transformation*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 130-42.

¹⁶ See Al Tizon, *Transformation after Lausanne: Radical Evangelical Mission in Global-local Perspective* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010).

lived a sinless life, died a sacrificial death, and risen again three days later. ... His ministry and his death are thus loosely connected.¹⁷

And Wright continues,

For the same reasons, ... the reformers and their successors have seemed to be much better exponents of the epistles than of the gospels. Although Luther and the others did their best to grasp the meaning of (say) Galatians as a whole, and to relate it to their contemporary setting, little attempt was made to treat (say) *Matthew* in the same way, or to ask what the evangelists thought they were doing in not merely collecting interesting and useful material about Jesus but actually stringing it together in what looks for all the world like a continuous *narrative*, a *story*. My later argument will, I hope, indicate that these two weaknesses – the failure to ask about the *theological significance of the ministry of Jesus*, and the failure to treat the gospels with full seriousness as they stand, that is, as stories – are among the chief causes of much present confusion, and that they can and must be remedied.¹⁸

Wright's complaint about the lack of emphasis on Jesus' life and ministry by the conservatives was made in 1996. Fortunately and thankfully, some remedy was not long in coming; in fact it had already arrived in 1995 when Philip Yancey's award winning book, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, was first published for popular readership.¹⁹ This book brought a breath of fresh air to the appreciation of Jesus for the conservative wing of the church because it covers the whole span of Jesus' birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension, and Yancey did good justice to the remarkable *story* of the remarkable person of Jesus. Since then, a significant number of popular books on Jesus have followed the trail blazed by Yancey; just visit the website of a well known Christian bookseller and type in the keywords, 'real Jesus', for a search and the result will be evident. However, it is still very difficult, if not impossible, to find a book which tells the *story* of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus from the perspective of his relationship with his Father through the Spirit. My contribution towards filling this gap in the literature is *The Forgotten Jesus and the Trinity You Never Knew*.²⁰

If Jesus Christ is eclipsed when his death is emphasised at the expense of his life, he can also be eclipsed when only his life is emphasised. The obvious problem with the latter is that the climactic revelation of God through Jesus in his atoning death and resurrection is neglected. However, there could also be a second problem with it, that of domesticating Jesus in

¹⁷ NTWright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), 14.

¹⁸ Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 14-15. Italics mine. A similar observation can be found in George Hendry, *The Gospel of the Incarnation* (London: SCM, 1959), 31.

¹⁹ Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1995).

²⁰ Op. cit. See also www.Jesus-Trinity.co.uk. A more academic treatment of this topic is So, *Jesus' Revelation of His Father*.

presenting his life. Albert Schweitzer criticised the Liberal Protestants in the nineteenth century for committing this error. He wrote,

We modern theologians are too proud of our historical method, too proud of our historical Jesus, too confident in our belief in the spiritual gains which our historical theology can bring to the world. ... There was a danger that we should offer them a Jesus who was too small, because we had forced him into conformity with our human standards and human psychology. To see that, one need only read the Lives of Jesus written since the sixties, and notice what they have made of the great imperious sayings of the Lord, how they have weakened down his imperative world-contemning demands upon individuals, that he might not come into conflict with our ethical ideals, and might tune his denial of the world to our acceptance of it. Many of the greatest sayings are found lying in a corner like explosive shells from which the charges have been removed. ... We have made Jesus hold another language with our time from that which he really held.²¹

We too risk the danger of presenting Jesus according to our own image and so domesticate him. The following very brief summary of Jesus highlights his radicalism which should not be domesticated:

The gospels present a Jesus who in his radical spirit of unconditional love reaches out and touches the lives of the marginalised, the oppressed, the poor, the 'unclean', the sinners, even the gentiles, and in so doing bursts through and transcends the legalistic barriers and ethnic boundaries treasured and insisted on by religious leaders. His uncompromising confrontations with the religious leaders in the matter of this revolutionary love escalates after his entry into Jerusalem and costs him his life as they crucify him on the cross. This story of a life of radicalism, a ministry of unconditional love which ends in suffering, rejection, death and resurrection is the story of Jesus' revelation of his Father – the God of radical unconditional love.²²

One wonders whether the presentations of Jesus in some missional efforts have in some ways domesticated or veiled him. The Lord Jesus Christ, in his dynamic revolutionary spirit of unconditional love and in his spirit of humble servanthood and utter self-giving, is an extremely dynamic and attractive figure as presented in the gospel story. The church will do well in her life and mission if she hears what the Spirit has to say about him through that story in Scripture to every generation.

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The Eclipse of the Spirit of God

It cannot be denied that in the Western Christian tradition, as opposed to the Eastern Orthodox tradition, the Holy Spirit was eclipsed for most parts

²¹ Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* (London, SCM Press, 2000), 398. See also Damon So, 'Knowing the Mind of Christ: The Failure of the Liberal Protestants in the Nineteenth Century and A New Possibility', *Transformation*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2008), 43-54.

²² Unpublished manuscript by the author. This description is comprehensively expanded in So, *The Forgotten Jesus and the Trinity You Never Knew*.

of her history of Christianity. However, there have been some notable exceptions, like the Montanists in the second century and the Pentecostals in the last and present centuries. Pentecostalism and its variants have been spreading like fires, especially since the second half of last century in Africa, Latin America and Asia.²³ Pentecostalism is a globalised phenomenon with great significance for Christianity and for mission in the twenty-first century.²⁴ Nevertheless, many churches are still not open to the dynamic and spontaneous work of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes, openness to the Spirit is associated with over-subjectivity and thought to be risky; it is thought to be safer to major on the objective revelation of the Son in history as given in the written text of Scripture. Churches with this inclination tend to be rational in outlook, which is to be affirmed for we must use our minds in knowing God, but they also tend to be more static, more routine, more controlled with insufficient room for the free and dynamic Spirit to work spontaneously and unexpectedly. The genuine sense of dependence on God can be weakened in these situations as human reason takes more or less complete control both in the life within the church and in mission. There can be great orderliness in the church and in mission practice but in its more severe form it can border on woodenness. In the extreme form, it could manifest itself in cessationism – the view that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit had ceased after the New Testament period.

The neglect of the Holy Spirit in Christian practice has its theological root. The root is that the church may not have spent sufficient attention in thinking about the Son's communion with his Father through the Spirit. That is, the root lies in the neglect of the doctrine of the Trinity by the church. Had the church been paying serious attention to Jesus' communion with his Father, she would have grasped the central role played by the Spirit in this divine communion within the Trinity. The Spirit is the bond of love (*vinculum caritatis*), the dynamic bond between the Father and the Son (*vinculum trinitatis*). With this key understanding of the Spirit within the Trinity, the church would have appreciated that the Spirit is the key to inter-personal relationship (indeed, the Spirit can be called the Spirit of communion or the Spirit of fellowship; see 2 Cor 13:14, Phil 2:1). The Spirit would have been seen as crucial in our communion with God and in our fellowship with one another in the church.²⁵ If one takes one logical

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²³ See Allan Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (London: SCM, 2007); Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus, Douglas Petersen (eds), *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel* (Oxford: Regnum, 1999); Donald E Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), chapter 1.

²⁴ Wonsuk Ma and Julie Ma, *Mission in the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010).

²⁵ See John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985); Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness:*

step further, we will see the inter-personal, holy and loving communion within the Trinity is of intrinsic and central value and so our inter-personal communion with God in the Spirit and our inter-personal fellowship with one another in the Spirit are of intrinsic and central value. This understanding of the intrinsic and central value of inter-personal communion and fellowship in the Spirit will revolutionise our whole value system and transform the way we live in the family, the church and the world.²⁶ The tasks that we do, in the family, the church, or in mission contexts of the world, will then never be done for their own sake, but for the sake of building or facilitating inter-personal relationships (whether with God or with fellow human beings). Efficiency which is so much treasured in the Western world (for its own good reason) should not be allowed to override valuable inter-personal relationships which are invariably treasured in non-Western contexts.²⁷ If the goal of our tasks is relation building, then mission becomes drawing more people into the network of loving relationships in the church (through faith in Christ and the power in the Spirit), and the church is in turn drawn by the Spirit into the holy and loving communion within the Trinity – into God’s communing presence, with our hearts full of praise, gratitude and worship to God. This inter-personal communion with fellow believers and with God is the very goal in the highly priestly prayer that Jesus himself prayed in John 17:20-21;

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as *you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us* so that the world may believe that *you have sent me*.

As Jesus prayed, this inter-personal communion with fellow believers and with God is fundamentally based on the archetypal communion within the Trinity – ‘you are in me and I am in you’ – and has *great missional value* (‘so that the world may believe that you have sent me’). And the Spirit is clearly implicit in this archetypal relationship in the context of John 14-17. The acknowledgement by the church of the key function of the Holy Spirit in facilitating inter-personal relationship of love and holiness will helpfully supplement her understanding of the Spirit as the source of divine supernatural power. The Holy Spirit has divine power to heal and exorcise and the Holy Spirit is the gentle Spirit who conveys God’s presence to us and brings persons together into holy and loving

The Church as the Image of the Trinity (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Thomas Smill, *The Giving Gift: The Holy Spirit in Person* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988).

²⁶ See So, *The Forgotten Jesus and the Trinity You Never Knew*, 222-33. See also Dalia and Nathaniel Lichfield, ‘Urban relationships: A challenge in town planning’, in Nicola Baker (ed), *Building a Relational Society* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996).

²⁷ This does not mean we can throw out efficiency altogether but its limited value must be observed and it must not be treated as the supreme goal.

relationship. Both activities of the Spirit have missional value (Acts 2:42-47). The Spirit should not be eclipsed in either domain of operation.

John Flett in *The Witness of God* complained that the act of mission is often conceived as secondary in nature relative to the primary being of the church. As this misconception can derive from the misconception of the division between God's being and God's act, the solution to this problem is to find a proper understanding of God and his act such that God's missionary act is somehow inherent in him from eternity.²⁸ Flett proposed that 'the Father's begetting the Son in the unity of the Spirit' in eternity, or the fellowship in the Spirit within the Triune God, i.e., the being of the Triune God in himself in eternity, already incorporates God's outward action towards the creation in history.²⁹ One might expand this idea by seeing the inherent nature of the Father and the Son to reach out towards one another through the Spirit of love as extending beyond the Trinity in eternity and reaching out to the world in history. If the church's being reflects the Trinity in the dynamic reaching out to others in the Spirit of love, then members of the church will reach out to one another in the Spirit of love, and reach out to people in the world in the same Spirit of love. Thus, the missionary act of the church is guaranteed by the nature of the church's being. In practice, this will be the case if the church has a proper understanding of the outreaching role of the Spirit both in the Trinity and in the church.

Three Brief Examples of Eclipses of Persons of the Trinity

For the category of Christomonism, the 'Jesus only' emphasis with scant reference to the Father or the Holy Spirit could produce the combined effects of neglecting the Fatherhood of God and neglecting the crucial work of the Spirit as described above. In this case, the precious notion of our sonship to the Father after the manner of the Son could be lost and the sense of dependence on the Spirit could be weakened (or there is a greater sense of dependence on human reason and power). Also, there could be less spontaneity (or more woodenness) in worship, in the practice of mission and in the organisation of the whole church. Furthermore, the paramount value of inter-personal relationship may be relativised; the believers may have a greater individualistic tendency and the church may lack a genuine sense of community. In the extreme case, where the understanding of Jesus is reduced to the last few days of his earthly life, the whole appreciation of the three persons of the Trinity would have been truncated down to one person and that is further reduced to a short time-span in history. This extreme case bears the undesirable consequence of combining most of the negative effects of eclipsing all three persons of the Trinity as described

²⁸ Flett, *The Witness of God*, chapter 1 and many other places in the book.

²⁹ Flett, *The Witness of God*, 288.

above. This scenario could produce a kind of mission which is more about saving individualistic souls for eternity than seeking the Kingdom of God on earth where the loving relationships between fellow human beings, and between humanity and God, will serve as a foretaste (or down-payment) of what is to perfectly come in the new Jerusalem.

For the extreme category of Spiritism where the Father and the Son is rarely in sight, there is hardly any emphasis on the objective revelation of the Father through the Son. This will result in too much spontaneity, over-subjectivity, the abandonment of God-given human reason and possibly much chaos and divisions in the church's life and mission.³⁰

For the extreme category of 'Arianism' where the Father is stressed at the expense of the Son and Holy Spirit, there could be little talk of the objective revelation of the Son, spontaneity in the Spirit or warm interpersonal relationship. This could be expressed in a monarchical or authoritarian church structure with a strict leader governing from above. One would not wish any church to fall into any of these extreme scenarios.

Proclaiming the Trinity in the Church and in Mission Contexts

In order for the message of the Trinity to make impact on the practices in the church and her mission, this message needs to be effectively and holistically communicated to grassroots-level audiences. One can appreciate the difficulty of proclaiming this message to a grassroots audience using abstract metaphysical language which is the norm in academic theology. A different approach must be used. I suggest adopting the approach of telling the whole gospel story of Jesus from the perspective of his relationship with his Father through the Spirit, as hinted above. The four gospels do tell that story from that perspective and my suggestion is no more than calling us to read and tell the gospels as they are, and not to truncate them artificially. In this telling of the whole story, the birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection and universal reign of Jesus are to be held together in view. To thread the different stages of the story together into a coherent whole, one can use a suitable threading theme which is inherent in the story itself. I suggest the theme of 'Jesus' identification with needy humanity'.³¹ The understanding of Jesus' birth, life and public ministry with this theme will not only help us to appreciate better the significance of Jesus' words and actions in these stages of the story but also help us to grasp the meaning of Jesus' death in a more profound manner – his death is the climax of his identification with needy humanity which can already be seen in his earlier birth, life and ministry. This approach will overcome the life/death, liberals/conservatives, dichotomy in the presentation of Jesus

³⁰ See So, *Jesus' Revelation of His Father*, 210-11.

³¹ See So, *The Forgotten Jesus and the Trinity You Never Knew*; 'The Missionary Journey of the Son of God into the Far Country'.

and the physical/spiritual dichotomy in practising mission. The holistic picture of Jesus corresponds to holistic mission. Of course, this holistic picture is to be presented within the wider story context of his intimate relationship with his Father through the Spirit, *which has great implications for the church and mission*. Since the story can be told orally by a storyteller (or via written text), it will have the widest appeal in mission, especially where the cultures are more oral in nature.

The Trinity as the Ground, the Means and the Goal of Mission

We now turn to the final subject of considering the significance of the Trinity for mission, i.e., God's mission (*missio Dei*).

God took the initiative not only to create the world and humanity but also to reveal himself through his dealings with Israel and finally through the coming of his Son Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit. It is because of God's creation and his self-revelation that we can have a knowledge of God. Without God's self-revelation through the Son in the power of the Spirit, there would have been no mission. In this first sense of taking initiative to draw near to humanity in revelation, the Trinity is the ground of mission. Furthermore, the subject whom we proclaim and witness to in mission is not some philosophical ideas but God himself. God the Father is not without his Son and when God reveals himself through his Son, the Son is also revealed. Not only that, the Father's relationship and communion with the Son through the Spirit is also revealed such that the Spirit is also revealed. In sum, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and their dynamic communal unity – the Trinity – are revealed. Thus, the Trinity is the subject of revelation and thereby the subject of the church's proclamation and witness. In this second sense of being the content of the message of mission, the Trinity is the ground of mission. Thirdly, Jesus in unity with his Father through the Spirit commissioned his disciples to the task of making disciples of all nations (peoples) and baptising them in the name (singular name) of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19). In this third sense of commissioning, the Trinity is the ground of mission. Taken together, the Trinity is the ground of mission in the three senses of taking the initiative, of being the content of the message of mission and of being the commissioner of mission.

The Trinity is also the means for mission. Firstly, the Father and the Son sustain and guide the disciples in mission by the Spirit. Christian mission is God's mission because of his guidance and sustenance by the power of the Spirit. Secondly, the holy and loving dynamic unity of the Trinity is the archetypal pattern for the life of the church. As the church lives in this loving unity, it will inevitably draw more people into this community (Jn 13:34, 17:20-23; Acts 2:42-47). I call this *missional unity of the church* (see 2.3 above). *The church in missional unity is at the same time drawn into, or participates in, and experiences the loving and holy communing presence*

of the Trinity (Jn 17:21). Thirdly, the Trinity exemplifies perfectly how diversity and unity can come together. The Trinity strongly directs us to see that the one gospel can be expressed in different forms in different cultures without losing the essence of the gospel (contextualisation or enculturation), and that churches from different cultures can genuinely commune with one another by participating in the Trinitarian life through worship and concerted service. The Trinity is thus the means for mission in the three senses that the Trinity sustains mission; patterns the church in missional unity and infuses the united and growing church with the divine presence; and requires the expression of the one gospel in diverse missional contexts.

Finally, the Trinity is the goal of mission. *When through the Spirit of holiness the believers experience loving fellowship with one another and at the same time experience the divine communal presence of the Trinity, the believers together are moved to worship God in the splendour of his majestic holiness and in the power of his overwhelming love.* In this spiritual experience of the ineffable presence of God, his people together worship and glorify God in Spirit and in Truth, which is the goal of the church's mission.

To conclude, since the Trinity is the ground, the means and the goal of mission, the mission that the church participates in is first and foremost God's mission (*missio Dei*); 'For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen' (Rom 11:36).

THE SPIRIT IN MISSION

Christina Manohar

Abstract in Tamil

ஆவியானவரின் ஊழியம்
கட்டுரையின் சுருக்கம்

இந்த கட்டுரை ஆவியானவருக்கும் மனிதருக்கும் உள்ள நெருங்கிய உறவை விளக்குகிறது. தேவ ஆவியானவர் மனித ஆவியுடன் நெருங்கிய உறவு கொள்வது வேதாகமத்தில், பழைய ஏற்பாட்டிலும் புதிய ஏற்பாட்டிலும் புல பகுதிகளில் கூறப்பட்டுள்ளது. இந்த நெருங்கிய உறவே ஆவியானவரின் ஊழியத்தின் அடிப்படை. இந்த அடிப்படையைக் கொண்டு இந்த கட்டுரை ஆவியானவரின் மூன்று விதமான ஊழியத்தை வாசகருக்கு கோடிட்டு காட்டுகிறது. முதலாவதாக, ஆவியானவரின் ஊழியம் மனித ஆவியுடன் நெருங்கிய உறவு கொண்டு, கிருஸ்துவை பற்றி போதித்து அவர்களை மேம்படுத்துவதிலும், வாழ்க்கையின் உண்மையான உயர்ந்த கருத்தை அளிப்பதிலும் மனிதரின் அதீத தன்னுணர்வில் தெய்வீக தன்மையையும் ஆன்மீக உணர்வையும், குறிக்கோளையும் கொடுப்பதில் காணப்படுகிறது.

இரண்டாவதாக, ஆவியானவர் வரலாற்றில் அர்த்தமுள்ள சமூகங்களை ஏற்படுத்துவதில் தன் ஊழியத்தை செயல்படுத்துகிறார். நெருக்கப்பட்ட மக்களை சுதந்திரமாக வாழவும், அவர்களை சமூகத்தில் அந்தஸ்து உள்ள மக்களாக உயர்த்துவதிலும் ஆவியானவரின் ஊழியம் நடைபெறுகிறது. மேலும் ஆவியானவர் உருவாக்கும் சமூகங்கள் பல வேறுபாடுகளையும் வேற்றுமைகளையும் உள்ளடக்கியதாகவும் அதே சமயத்தில் மக்களை கூறுபடுத்தாமல் ஒற்றுமை படுத்தக்கூடிய சமூகங்கள். ஆவியானவரின் பணி மனித சமுதாயத்தை உருவாக்குவது மட்டுமன்றி எல்லா சிருஷ்டிப்பும், இயற்கையும் மறுசீரமைப்பு பெற ஆவன செய்வதிலும் காணப்படுகிறது.

மூன்றாவதாக, ஆவியானவரின் ஊழியம் மக்களை உண்மைக்கு நேரே முன் நடத்திச் செல்வதில் காணப்படுகிறது. உண்மையின் பல பார்வை, நிலை, தோற்றம், அம்சங்கள், சிறப்பியல்புகள், விரும்பத்தக்க தனிப்பண்புகள் ஆவியானவரின் உதவியுடன் மட்டுமே அறியப்படும். விவேகம், மதிநுட்பம், ஞானம் ஒரு பெண்மையாக உருவகப்படுத்தப்பட்டு பொது இடங்களில் சத்தமிட்டு கூப்பிடுவதாக நீதிமொழிகளில் கூறப்பட்டுள்ளபடி மனிதரும், கலாச்சாரமும் கூடும் பொது இடங்களிலும் மனிதரும் இயற்கையும் கூடி பின்னி

சந்தர்ப்பங்களிலும் சூழமைவுகளிலும் உண்மை குடிகொண்டுள்ளது. இதை கண்டறிந்துகொள்வது தெய்வீக-மனித அல்லது தெய்வீக ஆவியும் மனித ஆன்மாவும் இணைந்து செய்யும் ஊழியம். இந்த ஊழியம் மேன்மையானது. அப்படிப்பட்ட ஊழியம் ஒரு தெய்வீக இசை.

Introduction

The writer of Psalm 139, overwhelmed by the divine presence, asks, where shall I go from this eternal presence and where shall I hide from this all pervading divinity? Divine presence is felt everywhere. It is not merely an exterior presence but the very everlasting presence in which we live, move and have our being. The Spirit being transcendent (the Spirit surpasses all space and time limitations) yet immanent (very near) makes it difficult to separate oneself from this awesome presence of the divine. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament give account of the 'coming' of the Spirit as well as 'indwelling' or 'abiding' Spirit. However we may say that the true understanding of the coming of the Spirit is in the abiding or the indwelling of the Spirit.

The Bible gives account of the fact that a certain kinship exists between the divine Spirit and the human spirit and that the mission of the Spirit is grounded on this kinship. By indwelling, influencing, inspiring, and vivifying humans and the whole of creation, the divine Spirit engages in mission. This article suggests that the mission of the Spirit begins in the deep encounter of the divine Spirit in the inmost part of human beings whether it is in an individual or a community. Three aspects of the Spirit's mission are highlighted here, namely, the Spirit's work within human beings, in forming communities in historical contexts and in leading every seeker into truth. Thus, this chapter aims primarily to offer a biblical-theological interpretation of the mission of the Spirit that stems from the deep communion between the divine Spirit and the human spirit. However, such understanding of the indwelling of the Spirit in the deepest recesses of human heart is not absent in other faith traditions. Hence, passing references to non-biblical ways of thinking of the Spirit are made in the

chapter in order to hint at some common grounds and correspondences in other faith traditions and as well as to enhance our own understanding of the Spirit in mission.

Communion Between the Divine Spirit and the Human Spirit

In the Hebrew pattern of thinking there is a certain kinship between the divine Spirit and the human spirit. Hebrew thought conceives of 'God as actively present in human consciousness and life.'¹ The Hebrew word '*ruach*', the Greek *pneuma* and the Latin *spiritus* – all have similar meanings. They refer to 'breath', 'wind', 'movement of air', 'God's energy', 'God's strength, power and dynamic activity',² The *ruach* is life-giving breath. It is the source of life.³ It is 'God's own power of creation, and the power of life, which is communicated, to all created things.'⁴ The Spirit is the creative and vital energy of all that lives.⁵ The Hebrew term *ruach* also denotes 'the vital principle' in human beings, their 'whole psychical life.'⁶ Human existence itself is the inspiration of divine breath since the life-breath of the human is ascribed to the 'creative inspiration of Yahweh.'⁷ This is the meaning of human spirit or soul (*nephesh*) in Hebrew thought. *Ruach* is what gives life and personality and it is 'what makes a

¹ Robinson H. Wheeler, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit* (Digswell Place: James Nisbet, 1958), 123.

² Alasdair IC Heron, *The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the Bible in the History of Christian Thought and in Recent Theology* (London: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1983), 3-4. For a detailed discussion on the meaning of the Spirit in the Old Testament see Friedrich Baumgärtel, 'Spirit in the Old Testament', *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, VI (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 359-367.

³ Refer to Gen 1:2; 6:17; 7:15; Gen 45:27; Judg 15:19; Ps 104:29; Ps 33:6; Job 33:4; 27:3; Is 42:5; Ezek 37:5.

⁴ J Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1990), 92.

⁵ Jean Laporte, 'The Holy Spirit, Source of Life and Activity According to the Early Church', in Edward D O'Connor (ed), *Charismatic Renewal* (London: SPCK, 1978), 57-99, 57.

⁶ Robinson, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, 20-21. For some more discussion on connection between the *ruach* of God and the *ruach* of human beings see R. Birch Hoyle, 'Spirit (Holy), Spirit of God', in James Hastings (ed) *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1921), 784-803. Hans Hübner observes that the Biblical writers often used the terms *ruach* and *pneuma* with different shades of meaning. They used it to refer to 'the centre of will and of action in human beings, that which is 'inmost' as making the whole of existence what it is.' Hans Hübner, 'The Holy Spirit in Holy Scripture', *The Ecumenical Review*, 41 no. 3 (1989), 324-338, 325. Therefore he comments, if the term 'spirit' refers to both human beings and the divine there is a possibility of speaking of 'an analogy between statements of God and statements of human beings in the Scripture.' Hübner, 'The Holy Spirit in Holy Scripture', 326.

⁷ Robinson, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, 122-123.

creature a recognizable human being.⁸ The term *pneuma* like the Hebrew *nephesh* is synonymous with the human soul or self or person.⁹

In Psalm 51:10-12, we find a certain affinity between the divine Spirit and the human spirit. CFD Moule comments that the author of this psalm sees *ruach* as part of him.¹⁰ If the divine Spirit had not been offered as a gift to humanity then life in the Spirit would have become impossible.¹¹ William P Alston remarks that the Scripture gives ample evidence of back and forth divine communication with humans.¹² 'People are experientially aware of God, that God presents himself to their experience in various ways and thereby provides them with an empirical basis for beliefs about his presence and activity.'¹³

The union between the divine Spirit and the human spirit does not take away the individuality of a person. In such interaction 'we are conscious of something that is both ours and his, without 'interference' with either activity; the very quality of the experience is in this reciprocity.'¹⁴ There is no merging of the human spirit with the divine Spirit. God does not replace human faculties, 'God's substance does not replace our substance.'¹⁵ In the communication between divine and human, the human faculties are not diminished.¹⁶

⁸ Alwyn Marriage, *Life-Giving Spirit: Responding to the Feminine in God* (London: SPCK, 1989), 31. Marriage points out that the ancient Chinese concept of 'Chi' like *ruach* means more than breath. 'When one takes part in the contemplative dance, the Tai Chi Chuan, one is learning to control and use one's breath, but along with that goes control and use of one's whole emotional and spiritual potential.' Marriage, *Life-Giving Spirit*, 32.

⁹ CFD Moule, *The Holy Spirit* (London: Continuum, 2000), 16.

¹⁰ CFD Moule, *The Holy Spirit*, 8.

¹¹ Joseph H. P. Wong, 'The Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus', *Gregorianum*, 73 (1992), 57-95, 72.

¹² William P Alston, *Divine Nature and Human Language: Essays in Philosophical Theology* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 7, referring to Ex 3:9-14; 4:10-12.

¹³ Alston, *Divine Nature and Human Language*, 7.

¹⁴ Robinson, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, 102. In the Orthodox tradition, the human being's essential distinctiveness lies in his or her openness towards God and a potentiality to grow and participate in divine life. So the image of God is not seen in terms of a static quality but in terms of dynamic growth and communion with God. There is no opposition between nature and grace since human nature is perceived in its internal relationship to God. J Meyendorff, 'Creation in the History of Orthodox Theology', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 27:1 (1983), 27-37, 34-35. In other words, '...man was originally created with the Holy Spirit, i.e. divine life, as part of man's *natural* existence...' J. Meyendorff, 'Philosophy, Theology, Palamism and 'Secular Christianity'', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 10:4 (1966), 203-208, 204.

¹⁵ Yves MJ. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 1, trans. by David Smith (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983), 32, referring to Rom 8:26, 14-15.

¹⁶ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 1, 32.

Christ is the revelation of such personal union. As Sinclair Ferguson writes, the communion between divine and human parallels the mystery of the divine-human engagement in incarnation.¹⁷ The *ruach* who was active in creation and is the source of life gives birth to Jesus. That the Spirit rested on Jesus accompanied Jesus and dwelt in Jesus shows that the Spirit is the immanent indweller. In Christ his human personality is not diminished by such ‘personal intercourse.’¹⁸ The revelation of Spirit through Jesus only shows that in him individuality, morality and religious aspiration attained its highest degree.¹⁹

Jesus’ own Spirit-filled life is a model for understanding our own encounter with the Spirit. This implies that ‘our highest category is personality, with its essential attribute of Spirithood’²⁰ and there can be a real co-existence between the human spirit and the divine Spirit. Hence, the Spirit indwells in human spirit and it is personal in nature and deeper than divine influence. One’s encounter with the Spirit is an encounter with God’s interiority at the deepest level of one’s self. It is the meeting of the Spirit or the depth of God with the spirit or the depth of the soul. Thomas Weinandy recognises, ‘... because of the Spirit dwelling within us, we are assumed into the very depths of God’s inner being – the mystery of God himself.’²¹ This is the basis for the mission of the Spirit. The Spirit’s mission takes place when the divine Spirit indwells or inhabits, where the in-breaking of the divine becomes a reality within the inmost being of a person or community.

The Spirit in Mission from Within

The first and foremost mission of the Spirit is within human consciousness. The inter-relation of the Spirit to spirit or divine and human co-existence goes back to prophetic consciousness. It means, ‘the heightening of all human powers, the clarifying of human vision and judgement, the strengthening of the human will...’²² There is always a downward movement to human spirit on the part of the divine Spirit. Likewise, there is an upward movement on the part of human spirit to the divine Spirit to ‘share some higher conception of the meaning of life.’²³ In John V Taylor’s view, the Spirit urges every creature to *higher consciousness* and

¹⁷ Sinclair B Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit: Contours of Christian Theology* (Illionis: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 176.

¹⁸ Robinson, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, 119.

¹⁹ Robinson, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, 119.

²⁰ Robinson, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, 66.

²¹ Thomas G Weinandy, *The Father’s Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 34.

²² Weinandy, *The Father’s Spirit of Sonship*, 41.

²³ Weinandy, *The Father’s Spirit of Sonship*, 79.

personhood.²⁴ The Spirit creates spontaneity, creativity; the Spirit sets people free and makes people responsible for making choices.

Taylor calls the Spirit the 'current of communication', 'a Go-Between'.²⁵ The Spirit is the link between Jesus and God. The Spirit is also the link between the risen Lord and humanity for the Spirit enables us to confess that Jesus is Lord (1 Cor 12:3). It is through the Spirit we know and experience Christ. The Spirit enables us to know the significance of Jesus' redeeming work (1 Cor 2:10-14). Walter Kasper thinks that the special role of the Spirit lies in interiorising and universalising the mystery of Christ in the world and in history.²⁶ Joseph Wong sees the role of the Spirit as 'responsive love, which consists in introducing all human persons to participate in the total response of Jesus towards the Father'.²⁷

The cry 'Abba Father' from the heart was first seen in Jesus' own spirituality and thus becomes a prayer-language of every individual and the church (Gal 4:6; cf. Mk 14:36). The verb 'cry' (*krazein*), is 'powerfully onomatopoeic and indicates the presence of intense feeling'.²⁸ In the Spirit we cry 'Abba Father' (Rom 8:15) and the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom 8:16) and cries in us: 'Abba, Father' (Gal 4:6). It is the cooperative cry that comes from the consciousness of the believer and the ministry of the Spirit.²⁹ This cry happens in the communion of the Spirit in the context of mutual knowledge. The Spirit also intercedes for us with God (Rom 8:26). When the believer is confused, desperate and too weak to express coherently, the Spirit intercedes and prays with groans that words cannot express, on behalf of the believer who is in despair. The closeness of the Spirit is a service to human kind. The Spirit's self communication and the Spirit's presence form Christ-like character from within. This person-forming character is the greatest mission of the Spirit. The Spirit, by abiding in a person forms a personal bond in helping, teaching, correcting and thus leading a person to a higher conception and meaning of life.

In Psalm 51:11 the psalmist's confession reveals his fear of losing the Spirit due to his moral failure. The author of the psalm, David, was more troubled and anxious about being cast out from the Lord's presence than by being disqualified for the high office for which he was chosen and anointed. He was conscious that only by possessing the Spirit could he have the joy of salvation restored to him. Ferguson writes,

²⁴ John V Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (London: SCM, 1972), 7.

²⁵ Taylor, *The Go-Between God*, 17.

²⁶ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ* (London: SCM, 1984), 211. Also Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (London: Burns & Oates, 1976), 250.

²⁷ Wong, 'The Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus', 74.

²⁸ Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 183.

²⁹ Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 185.

David may indeed fear that he is on the brink of experiencing the fate of Saul, and being removed from royal office (1 Sam 16:14) but on his lips the prayer has a personal-subjective-soteriological, and not merely an official-objective-theocratic, orientation. It is personal fellowship with God, not merely the security of his monarchy that concerns him here. For David, the presence of the Spirit and the possession of salvation and its joy are correlative.³⁰

In Isaiah 63:7-14, which narrates the Spirit's presence and guidance among people in their wanderings in the wilderness, we also read of the grief of the Spirit due to their rebellion. The indwelling Spirit enters into an interpersonal relationship for grief is an inter-personal activity. 'He forges an ethical (i.e. a holy and personal) bond between himself and the redeemed people; he may be 'grieved' by their behaviour as he was during the Exodus.'³¹

The Spirit's mission is often discerned in renewing persons from within, healing moral failure and broken relationships. In the New Testament, virtuous characteristics, called the fruits of the Spirit are formed in a person by the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). However, it is much deeper than forming a person within. Human reaching out to the divine and the divine coming to human fuse and become one in such communion that knowing becomes inter-personal communion in the deepest centre of one's being.

The central or the primary idea in the Hindu Upaniadic thinking is turning within or interiorisation or seeking the Ultimate Reality in the innermost self of one's being. A seeker of truth (*tattva-darsi*) desires to see the face of truth (*satyāsyapihitam mukham*) within, with the eyes turned within (*āvṛitta cakur*) in the immediate, direct knowledge (*pratyaka*).³² Such interiorisation or unification of being is bliss or *ānanda*. Bliss is found in the inner sanctum of self where it meets the divine Self in complete rest rather than in movement.³³

In Buddhism such deeper knowing is mindfulness in each moment. It is being alive in the present. Touching deeply one's self is touching deeply the present moment. Thich Nhat Hahn in his work *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, comparing the Buddhist understanding of mindfulness and the Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit, says 'To me, mindfulness is very much like the Holy Spirit. Both are agents of healing. When you have mindfulness, you have love and understanding, you see more deeply, and you can heal the wounds in your own mind.'³⁴ Thus, 'really hearing a bird

³⁰ Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 24-25.

³¹ Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 27-28.

³² Mariasusai Dhavamony, 'Indian Christian Theology', *Studia Missionalia*, 45 (1996), 95-118, 99.

³³ G. Gispert-Sauch, 'Notes for an Indian Christology', *Vidyajoyti Journal of Theological Reflection*, 61 (1997), 757-765, 90.

³⁴ Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (Rider, 1996), 14.

sing or really seeing a blue sky, we touch the seed of the Holy Spirit within us.³⁵

The emphasis on knowing within, the relationship and being in union with God raise awareness in humans that the good news of salvation in Christian term is immortality rather than merely being aware of sin, guilt and mortality. Such awareness of immortality here and now is life-affirming. Pandipeddi Chenchiah, an Indian Christian theologian of the nineteenth century thinks that the emphasis of newness of life that the Spirit brings in oneself is the beautiful message of the Gospel. In his view, salvation or new life is the sense or consciousness of 'harmonious blend with the divine.'³⁶

This is awareness of completeness or totality or in Sanskrit term *pūrnam*. Gispert Sauch says,

What is striking in all the systems of India is its ideal and great desire for liberation, for escaping this life of suffering and misery, a life which is also one of incompleteness: man feels constantly that something is missing in his existence. This is why India has a great awareness of the totality, of the full, the completeness.³⁷

The Spirit in mission is involved in bringing completeness, fullness of life and great joy or bliss in the inner core of the human self that frees human beings from all the ordinariness of life by imparting a higher perception of life and offering a taste of immortality here and now.

The Spirit in Mission Restoring Communities and Nature

In the Old Testament, the influence of the Holy Spirit was conceded in many ways and in diverse forms. The Spirit is often seen as a violent power seizing individuals in order to fulfil certain functions (e.g. Judg 3:10; 11:29; 14:6,9). But the Spirit also comes and dwells within a person. The Spirit of God dwelt in Joseph and Daniel (Gen 41:38; Dan 4:8-9; 5:11-14). The Spirit clothes himself with the individuals on whom the Spirit descends (Judg 6:34; 2 Chron 24:20). It was seen in the 'enhancement of natural powers' as in the case of Othniel (Judg 3:10), in the 'wisdom and discernment' as in the case of Joshua (Deut 34:9), and in addition to wisdom and understanding, in craftsmanship, as in the case of Bezaleel (Ex 31:3). Individuals were empowered to judge and to govern. Moses was empowered by the divine Spirit to govern the people of Israel (Num 11:25). Ferguson writes, 'When the nation was newborn but remained in danger of social chaos, the Spirit of God worked creatively to produce right

³⁵ Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, 21.

³⁶ Chenchiah, 'Appendix', in GV Job et al (eds) *Rethinking Christianity in India* (Madras: AN Sudarisanam, 1938), 1-54, 27.

³⁷ G Gispert-Sauch, 'Notes for an Indian Christology', 97.

government, order and direction among the refugees from Egypt (cf. Is 63:7-14).³⁸

The Spirit orders nation, forms people and brings them together as a community and nation. Communion is the work of the Spirit and communion is life and creation. Life and creation overthrow death and annihilation.

Further, the Spirit in mission in communion with people also suggests that the Spirit participates in the suffering of the people. The indwelling divine presence suffers along with people. In the Targums the term *Shekinah* is used to express the immanence of God who indwells his people.³⁹ The *Shekinah*, a feminine word in Hebrew, indicates feminine characteristics in the divine presence and activity. The *Shekinah* went with the people of Israel into exile and suffered along with them. This female image of the indwelling presence of God within the historical process reveals divine compassion in suffering. The *Shekinah*, provides for Israel's needs, goes ahead of Israel in the wilderness carrying the torch, lifts the people up and carries them. *Shekinah* is found in whatever wilderness people find themselves. The maternal divine presence settles in a tent wherever people travel in the path of suffering rather than in a fixed sanctuary. The relationship of divine presence with suffering people constitutes redemptive action and aids the forming of people into communities.

In the Hindu tradition, *Śakti* like *Shekinah* represents an immanent divine presence who cares for the people and builds them together. The word *Śakti* has various meanings in Hinduism. *Śakti* means force, activity, energy, the all pervasive, all-encompassing, omnipresent power of the divinity inherent in and manifested in the creation. *Śakti* is feminine creative power. We can also observe a relationship between *Śakti* and goddess worship. The goddess is seen as the feminine expression of divine. She represents 'life force and the processes of birth, death, and rebirth.'⁴⁰ She takes many forms, images, associations and colours. A number of fertility goddesses are worshipped in India. For example, the goddess Sakambhari who was worshipped from about 400 to 1000 CE, was associated with vegetative fertility. She was thought to have power to ward off droughts. The goddess takes care of the people. She says: 'Then until the rains come, I will provide the gods and the whole world with nourishing vegetables produced from my own body.'⁴¹ Some of the folk songs sung

³⁸ Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 22.

³⁹ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol 2 (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983), 79.

⁴⁰ Christina Manohar, *Spirit Christology: An Indian Christian Perspective* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2009), 242.

⁴¹ Devi Mahātmya section of the Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa (91:43-44), cited by MK Dhavalikar, 'Environment: Its Influence on History and Culture in Western India', *Indica*, 33 no. 2 (1996), 81-118, 116.

during certain Hindu festivals express the caring, loving, protecting and providing feminine divine power that is not only a creative power but also a sustaining power of creation and human communities.

Retuning back to the biblical accounts, Ezekiel 37:1-10 is another passage that reveals the intention of the Spirit of the Lord to gather people into a group as a community. The marginalised, oppressed, scattered and displaced people who are like dry bones become a strong community. 'Can these dry bones live?' Yes, they can when the breath of the Lord is in mission. As Jürgen Moltmann comments, this 'corporate aliveness'⁴² comes by the Spirit who constitutes relationship and affirms the marginalised as persons-in-community. Similarly, CB Webster, speaking about the dalit women in India, points out, that the marginalised and the oppressed want to be persons-in-community and 'the key word to self-affirmation and will for existence in one's own right is *shakti*-strength or power – rather than liberation.'⁴³ The divine *Śakti*, the transcendent and cosmic power of the new order of creation, overthrows oppressive structures and affirms the social, political place of the oppressed and marginalised humanity. Thus the divine *Śakti* in Hinduism preserves life and communities; brings wholeness and thus redefines power. The hierarchical, dualistic and patriarchal models lose their relevance and God/creation, mind/body, culture/nature, men/women, heaven/earth, subject/object dualities disappear in this view point.⁴⁴

The Spirit's role in building communities shows the significance of Spirit's role in the public arena. In Proverbs, the Lady Wisdom (Spirit, Word and Wisdom are used interchangeably in Hellenistic Judaism) appears in the public squares and she calls out in a loud voice reminding men and women to listen to her (Prov 1:33). She declares her role in the public sphere, in the cultures of people, in the political realm, providing guidance for kings and rulers (Prov 8:15, 16). In the context of oppression, institutionalised violence, marginalisation and discrimination, the most fundamental challenge is to work alongside the Spirit and in the Spirit. In the New Testament, Paul speaks about the *koinonia* of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14; cf. Phil 2:1). The genitive (*toῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος*) suggests that it is 'in communion with the Spirit that we experience the communion which the Spirit creates'⁴⁵ in our own context, in nation, in communities and people groups. As David Ford suggests, there is a great need to learn in the Spirit to communicate, deliberate, make decisions to take responsibilities to build up communities: learning in the Spirit permits 'exchanges across the boundaries of institutions, communities and

⁴² J Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1999), 45. Moltmann referring to Isa 32:14-18; Isa 44: 3-5 says that the outpouring of the Spirit brings out corporate restoration.

⁴³ CB Webster et al., *From Role to Identity: Dalit Christian Women in Transition* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1997), 13.

⁴⁴ Christina Manohar, *Spirit Christology*, 322.

⁴⁵ Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*. 175-76.

cultures', and allows the flourishing of 'high-quality communication and conversation'.⁴⁶ In his view, the high-quality communication must include many facets of existential life situations and involve communities in taking decisions together which are 'neither just a bargaining on the basis of power possessed nor a confrontational argument'.⁴⁷ In short, maintaining healthy communities demands the use of the gifts of the Spirit.

The Spirit's mission does not confine itself to forming human communities but it extends to care for nature. The Spirit is closely related to nature. Breath, wind,⁴⁸ water⁴⁹ and fire⁵⁰ are the symbols of the Spirit. According to Mark Wallace, this emphasises the Spirit's 'ecological identity'.⁵¹ For the medieval Benedictine, Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), 'Viriditas or greening' represents the presence of the Spirit. She also uses images such as 'planting' and 'watering' to speak of the Spirit.⁵² The Spirit is the power of renewal within creation. The Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Canberra gathered under the theme 'Come, Holy Spirit, renew the whole creation.' One of the Hindu participants of this assembly, Shanmugan Gangadaran, said that Hindus and Christians share in the common quest for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Another participant, Anantanand Rambachan, pointed out that Hindus and Christians share in the special sense of a transcendent God who is immanent in creation.⁵³ The Council's theme was a celebration of the economy of the Holy Spirit. This pneumatological theme has its Christological counterpart in the declaration of 'Behold I make all things new'.⁵⁴

Further, in the Hebrew understanding, 'to experience the *ruach* is to experience what is divine not only as a person, and not merely as a force, but also as *space* – as the space of freedom in which the living being can unfold'.⁵⁵ It is the 'broad place where there is no cramping'.⁵⁶ In the Kabbalistic Jewish tradition, God is also understood as 'MAKOM, the wide

⁴⁶ David Ford, 'Holy Spirit and Christian Spirituality', 269-290, in Kevin J Vanhoozer (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 288.

⁴⁷ David Ford, 'Holy Spirit and Christian Spirituality', 288.

⁴⁸ Jn 3:8; Acts 2:1-4.

⁴⁹ Jn 4:14.

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⁵⁰ Mt 3:11-12; Acts 2:1-4.

⁵¹ Mark Wallace, *Fragments of the Spirit: Nature, Violence, and the Renewal of Creation* (New York: Continuum, 1996), 13-14, cited by Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 161.

⁵² Ibid., 51, referring to Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* 3.7.9.

⁵³ KP Aleaz, *Dimensions of Indian Religion: Study, Experience and Interaction* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1995), 101.

⁵⁴ Rev 21:5.

⁵⁵ J Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 43, referring to Ps 31:8; Job 36:16.

⁵⁶ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 178.

space.⁵⁷ The Spirit is experienced not only as breath but also ‘spatially as breadth’ since we ‘live in God’s Spirit.’⁵⁸ It is in the Spirit, the space in us and around us that we grow. The basic awareness of interconnectedness of all things is the solution to all ecological problems. By understanding the space in oneself one is able to understand the space outside.

Similarly, one of the major Scriptures in Hindu tradition, the Īśā Upanishad, in its very first verse affirms that the Spirit pervades the whole universe. Further, the Upanishads speak of Brahman, the Ultimate Reality as *ākāśa*. Brahman is identified with the wider outer space because both *ākāśa* and Brahman share common characteristics. Augustine Thottakara describes,

The characteristics of subtlety, immensity, all-pervasiveness, incorporeality, oneness (uniqueness), eternality, etc. are common to *Akasa* and Brahman. All objects of this universe exist in the *Akasa*, it provides the matrix for all beings originate from, exist and move in and ultimately enter into the supreme Spirit, Brahman.⁵⁹

Chāndogya Upanishad 7.12.1-2 says,

In Space, verily, are both sun and moon, lightning, stars and fire. Through Space one calls out; through Space one hears; through Space one answers. In Space one enjoys himself; in Space one does not enjoy himself. In Space one is born; unto Space one is born. Reverence Space. He who reverences Space as Brahma – he, verily, attains spacious, gleaming, unconfined, wide-extending worlds. As far as Space goes, so far he has unlimited freedom, he who reverences Space as Brahma.

Chāndogya Upanishad 8.1.1 identifies *Ākāśa*, the Brahman, the Ultimate Reality with the small space, *ākāśa*, within human heart. The Ultimate Reality who is the cause of the whole universe, who pervades the whole universe, is found in the innermost self of human beings. By understanding the space in oneself one is able to understand the space outside. Environmental disaster is the result of losing sight of this relationship between inner and outer spaces. Only the true experience of the inner space would prevent us from desecrating the outer space. ‘It is by solving the problem in one’s own individual consciousness that a solution on the cosmic level can be discerned.’⁶⁰ Life-giving energies of the Spirit permeate the whole of creation. The Spirit encounters us as a gift and a challenge; as absolute affirmation of good, beautiful, togetherness and as

⁵⁷ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 43.

⁵⁸ Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 43. Boris Bobrinskoy speaks of the Spirit as the place of worship. Boris Bobrinskoy, ‘The Indwelling of the Spirit in Christ: ‘Pneumatic Christology’ in the Cappadocian Fathers’, *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, 28:1 (1984), 49-65, 57, referring to Deut 12:13; Jn 4:23.

⁵⁹ Augustine Thottakara, ‘Antaryamin: The Inner Spirit’, *Journal of Dharma*, 23:3 (1998), 341-359, 345.

⁶⁰ John B Chethimattam, *Consciousness and Reality: An Indian Approach to Metaphysics* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1971), 139.

absolute negation of evil and all that negates life and nature. The divine challenge-call invites a response from human beings. This divine challenge and human response is *theandric* (Divine-human). This *theandric* action constitutes human history and also preserves nature. Every organised struggle for liberation, equality, justice and preservation of nature has not only social meaning but also deep theological meaning. The Spirit's mission is not merely an epistemological one of teaching and reminding people about Christ but it is also a mission of liberation, transformation, renewal of communities and nature and prospering human life and the rest of creation in all its diversity.⁶¹

The Spirit in Mission Leading into the Truth

The Spirit collaborates with humans in leading them to and into the truth. The Christian belief is that the Bible itself is God-breathed (2 Tim 3:16-17). It was given by the persons who were borne by the Spirit (2 Pet 1:20-21). Both divine and human were involved in the process of making of the biblical writings. This is a mysterious act and very significantly, as we stated earlier, the Divine Spirit does not negate or minimize the individuality of the human authors rather their individuality is enhanced by divine intervention.

In the Old Testament prophets often claimed that the Spirit inspired them from within to speak (Jer 1:2, 8, 15, 19; 1:9; Is 59:21; 2 Sam 23:2). Joel's prophecy in Joel 2:28-32 affirms that the Spirit will be poured out on all people and all of the Lord's people will possess the knowledge of God. No longer is a teacher needed to impart the knowledge of God (Jer 31:34; Rom 8:3-4; 2 Cor 3:7-11) since in the new covenant in the Spirit, an immediate personal knowledge of God is possible.

Jesus spoke in a loud voice to the festive crowd on the last day of the dramatic water ceremony of the feast of Tabernacles and summoned them to come to him for the streams of living water (Jn 7:37-39). The ceremonies on the feast of Tabernacles reminded the people of their wanderings in the wilderness and looked forward to the pleasant days when the Spirit would be poured out (Ezek 36:25-27; 47:1; Is 43:20).⁶² To this expectant crowd Jesus says that he would be the channel of the Spirit that would be poured out.

In John 14:17 Jesus says that the Spirit of truth is 'with' the disciples now and later on, when he is gone, the Spirit of truth will be 'in' them. The sending of the Son by the Spirit (Lk 1:35; 4:18; Mk 1:12; Mt 4:1; 12:17-18) and the sending of the Spirit by the Son (Lk 24:49; Acts 1:5-8; Jn 15:26; 16:7) mutually interpret each other.⁶³ He is with them as Christ now and

⁶¹ Ford, 'Holy Spirit and Christian Spirituality', 271.

⁶² Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*. 66.

⁶³ Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 1, 45.

later on he will dwell in them as Spirit of the incarnate and exalted Christ.⁶⁴ The statements 'the Spirit of God lives in you', 'have the Spirit of Christ' and 'Christ is in you' are three ways of describing the single reality of the indwelling of the Spirit. This complex, multi-layered phenomenon indicates that there is an economic identity between Christ and the Spirit. This further indicates that there is difference and plurality in terms of God's dealings with people. Within one divine economy of salvation, there is a creative and constructive tension between the centrality of the Christ event and the universal activity of the Spirit.

In Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen's view, in John's gospel the Spirit is referred to as 'other *Paraclete*' (Jn 14:16) with the presumption that Jesus is the first *Paraclete* (1 Jn 2:1).⁶⁵ The term *Paraclete* means advocate, the one who defends, the one who helps, one who proves the world guilty, the one who comforts, the one who intercedes. He is the witness, revealer, interpreter and the one who leads us into truth. It has a varieties of meaning and no single one will exhaust the resonance of the term *Paraclete*.⁶⁶

In addition, since the Spirit is oriented towards the future, it sets us in a mode that is beyond concepts, logicalities and set definitions for the activities of the Spirit. The Spirit and Christ are mutual. The Spirit gives identity to Christ and Christ sends out the Spirit. Yet, the Spirit goes beyond history into a future not confined to the Word alone but expressed in 'unspeakable' words. In Dunn's analysis of Christology in the New Testament there is 'no single coherent understanding or presentation of Christ which meets us after Easter.'⁶⁷ Perhaps it is suitable to call it 'non-identical repetition of revelation'⁶⁸ to use Gavin D' Costa's expression. The Spirit is set in the open future, leading people into many forms and expressions of truth.

In Eastern thinking, particularly in Zen Buddhism, one speaks about the 'don't know mind.' This stems from the conviction that the Sacred Reality is ultimately one but the spirituality is plural. Likewise, *anekantavada* (the doctrine of non-exclusivity or multiple view points) one of the fundamental tenets of Jainism, teaches that reality and the expression of it have many

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⁶⁴ Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 68.

⁶⁵ Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, 35.

⁶⁶ See Raymond E Brown, 'The Gospel according to John xiii-xxi', *The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 1135-1143. Also, Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 1, 54-56.

⁶⁷ Roger Haight, 'The Case for Spirit Christology', *Theological Studies*, 53:2 (1992), 257-287, 271, citing James DG Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity* (2nd ed, London: SCM Press, 1990), 216.

⁶⁸ Gavin D' Costa, *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 122.

aspects, hence it is inexhaustible. Each time people view something, they view one or the other aspect differently from other times.⁶⁹

This understanding of the Spirit as leading us to unnumbered spiritual expressions enables one to cross the boundaries both theologically and in practice. Hence, multiple participation and double belonging is possible and does not create a 'cognitive dissonance' in the domain of belief.⁷⁰ For some Indian Christian theologians such as Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, Krishna Mohan Banerjee, Subba Rao, Pandipedi Chenchiah, Manilal Parekh and others it is possible to be both a Hindu and a Christian.

Daniel W Hardy says that 'we are actually drawn by the spirit into the truth, the awesome dynamic of God's pervasively boundary-shifting love...' Such boundary-shifting love that is manifest among people in communities is 'the mark that the Spirit has drawn us into the suffering death and resurrection of Jesus.' The dynamic of this love binds us together yet frees us to discern the presence of God in the interweaving of human beings, their cultures and in the natural world.⁷¹

Hence, Lady Wisdom's appearance in the public realm, her seat at a location of prominence and influence within culture, in the street, in the squares, at the busiest corner, at the entrance of the city gates, at the crossroads, the highest places in the town, remind us that 'Wisdom is something not only needed, but also found in the crossroads and high places of our culture.'⁷²

Lady Wisdom was with God in creation. She delights in the human race, its pursuits, cultures and endeavours. She takes pleasure in establishing cosmic order and also bringing order, truth, justice and social harmony among humans.

Wisdom warns us not to flee from the public to the private, but rather to accept the invitation to engage in public discourse and academic pursuit, not only bringing wisdom to bear upon such discourse and pursuit; but also embracing Wisdom wherever she may be found.⁷³

Such perception and understanding of the knowledge in and through the Spirit gives freedom within our own selves, to act freely and humanely in love within our own particular context and to acknowledge others as free beings in God. It is a kind of freedom that is open to form communities and integrate old into new; it welcomes an open home, an institution that gives space to one another. As Daniel Hardy writes, 'the right use of our freedom

⁶⁹ Dhavamony, 'Indian Christian Theology', 103.

⁷⁰ Kusumita Pedersen, 'Spirituality Beyond the Boundaries of Religion', *Current Dialogue*, 4 (June 2006), 29-33, 32.

⁷¹ Daniel W Hardy, 'The Future of Theology in a Complex World: An Opening to Discussion', 21-42, in Hilary D Regan, Alan J Torrance, Antony Wood (eds), *Christ and Context: The Confrontation between Gospel and Culture* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 41-42.

⁷² Mark J. Boad, 'The Delight of Wisdom', *Themolios*, vol. 30:1 (2004), 4-11, 11.

⁷³ Boad, 'The Delight of Wisdom,' 11.

is ex-centric, outward turning, conferring the benefits of our particularity upon those with whom we are interwoven.⁷⁴ This knowledge leads one to simply uncover the interweaving of human beings and the rest of creation that is already actively present by God's grace.⁷⁵ This suggests that God is found in the 'dynamic structured relationality'.⁷⁶ This indeed is the mission of the Spirit that guides and leads the seeker to discern God in the braiding together of the whole reality. It is again a *theandric* practice. Truth is in this sense a seeking and discovering and also a *theandric* creation. This seeking, discovering and creating becomes a task of theology that is done in Divine-human communion and such theology is nothing but a hymn of praise to God or a doxology.

Conclusion

The Spirit is the mystery of God who is closer to us than we are to ourselves. The kinship that exists between the divine Spirit and human spirit is the basis of the Spirit's mission in and with humans and care for the whole of creation. Hence, first of all, the Spirit's mission is seen in forming persons within. The close relationship and bond created in communion with the divine Spirit raises human perception and takes it to a higher plane of freedom and activity in the Spirit.

Secondly, it is shown in liberating compassion, forming communities and restoring nature. The Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. Such freedom is manifested in enabling humans to create communities that are inclusive, broader in their boundaries and wider in their horizons. With a higher conception of life, humans are enabled to live not only for themselves but also for others. Such self-less love is the essence of freedom that is rooted in the activity of the Spirit. The Spirit's liberating compassion extends to whole of creation that is longing for liberation. The Spirit's mission is seen in renewing and restoring nature in all its diversity.

Thirdly, the Spirit's mission is seen in leading into truth wherever that may be found, especially in the true braiding of humanity with one another and with nature. This is a *theandric* activity of discerning, understanding and seeking truth wherever it may be found, of unfolding truth that is already found in the interweaving of humans and nature and creating truth in divine-human communion. Such mission is nothing but a well sung hymn of theology.

⁷⁴ Daniel W Hardy, 'The Spirit of God in Creation and Reconciliation,' 237-258, in Hilary D Regan et al, *Christ and Context: The Confrontation between Gospel and Culture*, 254.

⁷⁵ Hardy, 'The Spirit of God in Creation and Reconciliation,' 255.

⁷⁶ Hardy, 'The Spirit of God in Creation and Reconciliation,' 238.

A THEOLOGY OF MISSION FROM AN ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVE

Petros Vassiliadis

Abstract in Greek

Κατά την μακράιωνη ιστορία της Ορθοδοξίας διαμορφώθηκαν τρία ιδιάζοντα θεολογικά χαρακτηριστικά, τα οποία και προσδιορίζουν την θεολογική κατανόηση της ιεραποστολής: η *εκκλησιολογική* της αυτοσυνειδησία ότι αποτελεί την «μία, αγία, καθολική και αποστολική εκκλησία», η *χαρακτηριστική της πνευματολογία*, και η *μοναδική ανθρωπολογία* της, δηλαδή η διδασκαλία περί *θεώσεως*.

Οι συνέπειες αυτής της κατανόησης, εκτός του ότι επαναπροσδιορίζουν την ιεραποστολή ως *μαρτυρία*, και *Λειτουργία μετά την λειτουργία*, καθορίζουν και τον ολιστικό της χαρακτήρα. Έτσι νομιμοποιείται όχι μόνον ο *διαθρησκευτικός διάλογος*, αλλά και κάθε είδος κοινωνικής ενασχόλησης, από τον αγώνα για την ειρήνη, την δικαιοσύνη, την εξάλειψη της πτώχειας και την ανατροπή του παγκόσμιου οικονομικού συστήματος, μέχρι την μέριμνα για το περιβάλλον, την διατήρηση δηλαδή της ακεραιότητας της κτιστής δημιουργίας.

Introduction

An Orthodox perspective is often a vague attribution, since Orthodoxy is normally defined in confessional or denominational terms as the Eastern branch of Christianity which was separated from the West around the beginning of the second millennium CE. This is how the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* describes the Orthodox Church: ‘a family of churches, situated mainly in Eastern Europe: each member church is independent in its internal administration, but all share the same faith and are in communion with one another, acknowledging the honorary primacy of the Patriarch of Constantinople.’ This definition no longer holds true. Closer to the truth was the analysis provided by DJ Bosch.¹ Although Bosch in his opening chapters deals with the *Greek speaking world*, in which Christian ideas of mission were influenced by Greek philosophy, the picture he gives is almost identical to the Orthodox understanding of

¹ DJ.Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991).

mission. Having little expectation of the immediate return of Jesus and being settled into this world, the church inevitably acquired a concrete mission to save the world by lifting human nature up into the Divine. As sign and symbol of God's presence in the world, the church called people to a mystical communion with God. If one has to isolate a biblical text as a foundation for the mission of the church in this period it is certainly John 3:16, 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.' God loved us and Christian mission was to love and worship God.

The People of God

Orthodoxy, according to its most serious interpreters, refers to the wholeness of the people of God who share the right conviction (*orthodoxia*) concerning the event of God's salvation in Christ and his church, and the right expression (*orthopraxis*) of this faith. *Orthodoxia* leads to the maximum possible application in *Orthopraxis* of charismatic life in the freedom of the Holy Spirit, in all aspects of daily public life, social and cosmic alike. Everybody is invited by Orthodoxy to transcend confessions and inflexible institutions without necessarily denying them. The late Nikos Nissiotis has reminded us that Orthodoxy is not to be identified only with us Orthodox in the historical sense and with all our limitations and shortcomings.² 'We should never forget that this term is given to the One, (Holy, Catholic and) Apostolic Church as a whole over against the heretics who, of their own choice, split from the main body of the church. The term (Orthodoxy) is exclusive for all those, who willingly fall away from the historical stream of life of the One Church but it is inclusive for those who profess their spiritual belonging to that stream.'³ The term Orthodoxy, therefore, has more or less *ecclesial* rather than *confessional* connotations. For this reason one can safely argue that the fundamental principles of Christian spirituality, of Christian mission, are the same in the East and in the West. What I am going to say, therefore applies to the entire Christian faith, to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. In what follows, therefore, I will freely alternate the terms 'Orthodoxy' and 'Christianity', avoiding as much as possible any reference to the canonical boundaries of the term 'church'.

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This ecclesial understanding of Orthodoxy has been first put forward by an eminent Russian theologian, the late George Florovsky, who speaking at an ecumenical meeting in the name of the One Church has declared: 'the church is first of all a worshipping community. Worship comes first,

² N Nissiotis, 'Interpreting Orthodoxy', *Ecumenical Review* 14 (1961), 1-27.

³ Ibid., 26. Cf. also the notion of *sobornicitatea* (open catholicity) advanced by D Stăniloae, *Theology and the Church*, 7. More on this in N. Mosoiu, *Taina prezenței lui Dumnezeu în viața umană. Viziunea creatoare a Părintelui Profesor Dumitru Stăniloae* (Pitești/Brașov/Cluj-Napoca 2000), 246ff.

doctrine and discipline second. The *lex orandi* has a privileged priority in the life of the Christian church. The *lex credendi* depends on the devotional experience and vision of the church.⁴

All the above have immediate bearing upon the Orthodox understanding of mission, indicating at the same time how deeply theological the foundation as well as the understanding, of mission in the Orthodox world is. It is important to note, that the approach to any aspect of Christian life from an Orthodox perspective is normally determined by the church's uninterrupted theology. From the very beginning of its life the church has never understood her existence, her life, and her mission without a reference to theology. Theology, of course is not understood as a set of theoretical convictions, but as the living experience of the people God embarked to proclaim the Good News to the end of the world. In this respect the importance placed on theology by the Orthodox does not by any means result in surrender to a 'theology from above' at the expense of a 'theology from below'. As a great theologian of the East, being also a bridge between East and West, St Maximos the Confessor has clearly affirmed, 'a theology without action is a theology of the Devil.'

Although we have defined Orthodoxy in ecclesial terms above, insisting in other words that the primary criterion of Orthodoxy is ecclesiology, there are quite a number of distinctive characteristics of what is normally identified as the historical Orthodox Church. And these characteristics have been instrumental in shaping her understanding of mission: her *ecclesiological* awareness as the 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic church', her peculiar *Pneumatology*, and her *anthropology*, i.e. her characteristic teaching of *theosis*.

Ecclesiology

From the very beginning of their existence the Orthodox have never lost sight of the heart of their *ecclesial* identity, which was – and still is – manifested in the *Eucharist*, the mystery *par excellence* of the coming together of the people of God in communion, the *proleptic* manifestation of God's glorious kingdom in our present-day realities. Centered on the Eucharist and believing in all humility to be the authentic bearer of the apostolic tradition, the Orthodox are commissioned to be witnesses of the whole Gospel to the whole world. Without losing sight of the fundamental conviction that Jesus Christ is '*the way, the truth and the life*' (Jn 14:6) they invite all those who left the undivided church to return to that authentic apostolic tradition (without rejecting their local traditions) and together restore the 'given by God' unity of the church. The Orthodox Church humbly believes that although she is the authentic bearer of the

⁴ G Florovsky, 'The Elements of Liturgy', in G Patelos (ed), *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva, 1978), 172-182, 172.

apostolic tradition she is but *the* preeminent instrument in the 'mission' of the Triune God (*missio dei*); that God uses not only the church, but many other powers of the world for his mission for the salvation of humankind and the entire creation. In this way the emphasis in mission is no longer placed on mere *proselytistic* activities, but on complete *conversion* of both the Christian evangelizers and those to whom the witness is rendered. With such a total transformation the implementation of God's Rule more easily becomes a reality, since according to the biblical *magna carta* (Mt 25), God judges humanity with criteria other than the conventional religious ones. With the '*economy of the Spirit*' the narrow boundaries of the church are widened, and the cultural (and religious) superiority syndromes give place to a 'common witness' and a humble 'inter-faith dialogue'.⁵

Pneumatology

This brings us to the second characteristic of Orthodoxy, its *Pneumatology*, which offers even more radical implications, compared with the normal western missionary standards. On the basis of the biblical pneumatological foundations, according to which the Holy Spirit, is the '*Spirit of Truth*' that leads us to the '*whole truth*', (Jn 16:13) and '*blows wherever He/She wills*' (Jn 3:8), thus embracing the whole of cosmos, the Orthodox have developed a Pneumatology, not always familiar to the West. Almost thirty years ago Metropolitan John Zizioulas presented to the ecumenical community an interesting scholarly analysis on the theology of the Holy Spirit and argued that from the very beginning of the life of the church – actually from the time of the New Testament and the early patristic writings – till the ecumenical era, there were two understandings of Pneumatology: one familiar in the West, even to the present day, which conceives of the Holy Spirit as fully *dependent on* Christ, and therefore understood as an agent of Christ to fulfill the task of mission; and another one, which was more consistently developed in the East, which understands the Holy Spirit as the *source of* Christ. The former was called by Zizioulas 'historical' and the latter 'eschatological'.⁶

Since these two understandings of Pneumatology are obviously contradictory to each other, two completely different approaches to mission

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⁵ Metropolitan George Khodr, 'Christianity in a Pluralistic World – The Economy of the Holy Spirit', *Ecumenical Review* 23 (1971), 118-128. Also Khodr, 'An Orthodox Perspective on Inter-Religious Dialogue', *Current Dialogue* (January 1991), 25-27.

⁶ J Zizioulas, 'Implications ecclésiologiques de deux types de pneumatologie,' *Communio Sanctorum. Mélanges offerts à Jean Jacques von Almen* (Geneva : Labor et Fides, 1982), 141-154. Zizioulas' views were presented within the context of the *ecclesiological* discussions in an attempt to promote the visible unity of the Church. With the exception of a reference to their consequences for mission, these views had in mind the *unity* of the Church, not her *mission*.

have emerged in the history of Christianity, resulting also in two almost opposite approaches to ecclesiology. The Orthodox generally understand the church in terms of *coming together* (i.e. as the eschatological *synaxis* of the people of God in his Kingdom) with mission coming only as a consequence of it, as a *Liturgy after the liturgy*, and the faithful *going forth* in peace (in mission) only after they had experienced as a glimpse and foretaste the eschatological Kingdom of God in their Eucharistic liturgical service. In the West it was normally the other way round: mission was a constitutive element of their identity and in some cases prior to the Eucharist.

A completely new theological foundation of mission can emerge when one brings together two aspects. Firstly, one acknowledges the close connection between pneumatology and eschatology, as in Acts 2:17 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.' Secondly, one takes the Orthodox type of Pneumatology seriously into consideration, and builds upon Christ's self-understanding as the *Messiah of the Eschaton*, i.e. his conviction that he was the centre of the gathering of the dispersed people of God (cf. Jn 11:52). It was actually on the eschatological teaching of the Historical Jesus about the Kingdom of God that the early church developed, not only her understanding of the church (ecclesiology), but also her theology of mission (missiology).

With regard to ecclesiology in the Orthodox Church, even the episcopocentric structure of the church is seen as an essential part of the eschatological vision of the church. The bishop as the presiding *primus inter pares* in love over the eucharistic community, is not understood as a vicar or representative, or ambassador of Christ, but as an *image* of Christ. So with the rest of the ministries of the church: they are not *parallel to*, or *given by* but *identical* with those of Christ. That is also why the whole Orthodox theology and life, especially as this latter is expressed in Sunday's liturgical offices, are centered around the resurrection. The church exists not because Christ died on the cross, but because he is risen from the dead, thus becoming the *aparche* (beginning) of all humanity.⁷

As to missiology, the apostles – and all Christians thereafter – were commissioned to proclaim not a set of given religious convictions, doctrines, and moral commands, but the coming kingdom, the Good News of a new reality to be established 'in the last days'. This kingdom has as its centre not the powerful emperor, but the humble crucified and resurrected Christ.⁸ It was based on the incarnation of God the Logos and his dwelling

⁷ J Zizioulas, 'The Mystery of the Church in Orthodox Tradition', *One in Christ* 24 (1988), 294-303. More on all these in J Zizioulas, *Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York, 1985).

⁸ For more detail see Vassiliadis, 'The Eucharistic Perspective of the Church's Mission', in *Eucharist and Witness. Orthodox Perspectives on the Unity and Mission of the Church* (Geneva/Boston: WCC/Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 49-66.

among us human beings, and on his continuous presence through the Holy Spirit in a life of communion, in a life of full-scale reconciliation.⁹

Anthropology

The above 'ecclesiological' and 'pneumatological' understanding mission is also reinforced by a peculiar 'anthropology' which in the Orthodox East is expressed by such terms as *theosis* or *deification*. Whereas in the post-Augustinian Western Christianity a clearly static dichotomy between 'nature' and 'grace' was developed as a result of the 'original sin', in the East a more inclusive and dynamic anthropology was theologically elaborated. In the Orthodox tradition human nature was never a closed, autonomous, and static entity; its very existence was always determined by its *relationship* to God. Guided, therefore, by a vision of how to 'know' God, and 'participate' in his life, the Orthodox considered their witness in close connection with the notion of a *synergetic* soteriology and the anthropology of *theosis* or *deification*. Human beings are 'saved' neither by an extrinsic action of God (as e.g. the 'irresistible grace' of Augustine), nor through the rational cognition of propositional truths (cf. the scholastic theology of Thomas Aquinas), but by 'becoming God'. In addition to their 'given' status at God's creation in his 'image' (*kat' eikona*), the Christian understood as their permanent task – and consequently to proclaim this truth to the world – to achieve his 'likeness' (*kath' omoiosin*), restoring in other words their 'nature' to its original status.¹⁰ Rooted in the normative biblical (Pauline) expressions of life 'in Christ' and 'in communion of the Holy Spirit', and inextricably connected with Christology, as it was first articulated by St Athanasius ('*Christ became human, so that we may become Gods*'), this later Orthodox (soteriological, anthropological, and missiological) notion of *theosis* is not to be confused with the neo-platonic return to an impersonal One nor a replacement of the biblical (Pauline) *justification by faith*. It is quite inadequate to contrast *dikaiosis* (justification), much celebrated in the Protestant world, with the Orthodox *theosis* (deification) as mutually exclusive terms, although this has been the case among the fundamentalists on both sides. Deification is rather a further development of traditional biblical justification view and a true

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⁹ See Vassiliadis, 'Reconciliation as a Pneumatological Mission Paradigm (Some Preliminary Reflections by an Orthodox)', *International Review of Mission* 94 (No 372 January 2005), 30-42; also P Vassiliadis and D Passakos, 'Versöhnung als ein pneumatologisches Missionsparadigma. Oder was es bedeutet, sich zu einer Missionskonferenz in Athen zu treffen', *Oekumenische Rundschau* October (53) 2004, 444-458.

¹⁰ More in John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: FUP, 1974), 2, 138, 143.

continuation of the 'social' (Cappadocian, compared to what is labeled as 'Latin') understanding of the Holy Trinity.¹¹

This *relational* and *synergetic* theology has resulted in a much more inclusive understanding of mission than the conventional exclusivist one that has developed in the pre-ecumenical era in almost all missionary endeavours in the West. Of course, we should be cautious not to dissociate the 'economy of the Spirit' from the 'economy of Christ/the Word'; Pneumatology should never overshadow Christology. Rather one should keep Christology at the centre, allowing it only to be conditioned in a dynamic way by Pneumatology. The Orthodox understanding of mission has never insisted on a *universal proselytism*, but on the authentic *witness* of the church's eschatological experience. This was, in fact, made possible by defining *missio Dei* on the basis of John 21 and the fundamental assumption of the trinitarian theology, 'that God in God's own self is a life of communion and that God's involvement in history aims at drawing humanity and creation in general into this communion with God's very life'.¹² This ultimate expression of *koinonia* and love is transmitted to the whole world not as dogmas or ethical commands, but as a communion of love.

Taken a little further, this understanding of Christian witness suggests that the problem of ethics (i.e. the problem of overcoming the evil in the world), and ultimately the quintessence of mission, is not only a moral and social issue; it is also – and for some even exclusively – an *ecclesial* one. It is so in the sense that the moral and social responsibility of Christians, which is their mission in today's pluralistic world, is the logical consequence of their ecclesial self-consciousness.

Today in the field of world mission we speak for the '*oekoumene which is to come*' (Heb 2:5 cf. 13:14ff.), as it is described in the book of Revelation (ch 21 and 22), as an open society, where an honest dialogue between the existing living cultures can take place. The world's pluralistic societies can and must become a *household* (*oikos*), where everyone is open to the 'other' (as they are open to the Ultimate Other, i.e. God), and where all can share a common life, despite the plurality and difference of their identity. As Konrad Raiser has rightly pointed out¹³ the term *oekoumene* and its derivatives (ecumenism etc.) no longer describe a given

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¹¹ Theodore De Régnon (*Etudes de théologie positive sur la sainte Trinité*, Paris, 1898) was the first in modern scholarship to introduce the distinction between the 'social' (Cappadocian) and the 'latin' (Augustinian) trinitarian theology. See, however, MR Barnes, 'De Régnon Reconsidered', *Augustinian Studies* 26 (1995), 51-79, as well as John Behr, 'Calling upon God as Father: Augustine and the Legacy of Nicaea,' A Papanikolaou and GE Demakopoulos (eds), *Orthodox Reading of Augustine* (Crestwood: SVS Press, 2008), 153-165.

¹² Ion Bria (ed), *Go Forth in Peace* (Geneva: WCC, 1986), 3.

¹³ K Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition. A Paradigm Shift in the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC, 1991), 79ff.

situation. When we talk about the *oekoumene* we no longer exclusively refer to an abstract universality, such as the entire inhabited world, or the whole human race, or even a united *universal church*. What we actually mean is substantial – and at the same time threatened – relations between churches, between cultures, between people and human societies, and at the same time between humanity and the rest of God's creation.

Consequences: Interfaith Dialogue and Social Concern

The consequences of such an understanding of mission are far reaching encompassing not only the 'inter-faith' encounter and dialogue, but also all kinds of social engagements, including the struggle to implement justice and peace, to eradicate poverty in the world, to reverse the unjust world economic system as it acts contrary to God's will and above all to protect the integrity of creation.

This *pneumatological* and *deification* understanding of mission has nothing to do with *syncretism*. Those who believe in the importance of *inter-faith dialogue*,¹⁴ mainly on the basis of the 'economy of the Spirit' – and the Orthodox also on the basis of the anthropology of *deification* – insist that mutual respect, peaceful relations and co-existence with the faithful of other beliefs (or even non-believers) do not by any means lead to the naïve affirmation that *all religious are the same*. On the contrary, dialogue and co-operation are necessary, exactly because the various religious traditions are different and promote different visions of the reality. In inter-faith dialogue the encounter between religions (more precisely between the *faithful* of different religions) is understood as an encounter of mutual commitments and responsibilities to the common goal of humanity to restore communion with God, and thus restoring God's rule 'on earth as it is in heaven'.

This kind of Christian witness does not aim at the creation of a new 'pan-religion', or a new 'world religion', as it is quite naively claimed by ultra-conservatives from all Christian confessions, but would inevitably lead to a 'communion of faithful from different religious traditions'. After all, this is the ultimate goal of the divine economy, as it is clearly stated in our normative biblical foundations (cf. Eph 1:10, Col 3:11 etc). The inter-faith endeavour not only decreases the enmity and the hostilities between people of different religions,¹⁵ but it is also a call to the faithful of all

¹⁴ For an early contribution to the debate cf. (Archbishop of Albania) Anastasios Yannoulatos, *Various Christian Approaches to the Other Religions (A Historical Outline)* (Athens, 1971).

¹⁵ If one surveys the diverse religio-cultural contexts of the Orthodox Churches, one can observe that there is a long history of peaceful co-existence between Orthodox and people of other religions. When the Crusaders in the Middle Ages launched the dreadful campaign to liberate the Holy Land, they accused the Orthodox of 'being too tolerant toward the Muslims'!

beliefs and to the people of all convictions to engage in an effort to universally promote – in addition to human rights – the, much needed, human responsibilities.

As to the latter, the place of Orthodoxy, as all preeminent Orthodox theologians insist, is not on the margin of history, but at the centre of *social struggles*, the social fermentations as a pioneer agent in the reconciling work of the Holy Spirit. Mission is conceived by the Orthodox as a response to the call of the Triune God for a common journey and a participation in the love of God. Hence the importance it gives to a the doxological praise of God in liturgy and to *martyria-mission* – which extends even to *martyrdom*, which is why they prefer the term *witness* rather than the conventional *mission*. For the Orthodox the liturgy is not only a springboard for mission (that is why they call it the *Liturgy par excellence* or *Liturgy after the liturgy* – which can also mean that mission is a *Liturgy before the actual liturgy*), but a proleptic manifestation of God's Kingdom and an offering and thanksgiving for the *oikoumene*, in fact for the entire world. Above all it makes the 'other' a partner in mission, not an 'object' of mission. Viewing all people to whom the Christian witness is rendered as co-workers in God's mission, the Orthodox believe that they *synergetically* assist in the realization of the work of the Holy Spirit for a new world order, a new world economy based on the biblical truth that the '*land belongs to the Lord*' (Ps 23:1) and caring for the 'fullness of life'. The Orthodox Pneumatology results in a Christian witness that unceasingly promotes the salvific power of God through Jesus Christ, but does not obliterate God's dynamic involvement through the Holy Spirit into the whole created world.

CREATION AND KINGDOM-CENTERED THEOLGY FOR *MISSIO INTER-GENTES*

Edmund Kee-Fook Chia

Abstract in Malay

Bab ini meninjau asas-asas misi dengan meneroka teologi berpusatkan penciptaan, teologi berpusatkan kerajaan dan misi dari perspektif misi antara-gentes. Tema pertama membincangkan idea-idea Kristian mengenai Tuhan pencipta. Yang kedua adalah mengenai idea-idea Yesus, terutama teras kehidupan and kementeriannya. Ketiga mengkaji peranan gereja dalam konteks pluralisme agama. Pembincangan tema-tema ini adalah dari pandangan Roman Katolik dengan kanta Asia. Tulisan Edward Schillebeeckx akan digunakan dan diaplikasikan kepada theologi yang sedang membangun di seluruh dunia.

Introduction

As can be seen from the rather lengthy title above, this chapter looks at the foundations of mission through an exploration of multiple theological themes. First, it explores what has come to be known as creation-centered theology. Second, it examines this in concert with a kingdom-centered theology. Third, it looks at both these themes in the context of mission and especially from the perspective of *missio inter-gentes*. This three-fold theme is by no means arbitrary. It unfolds through a Trinitarian paradigm, examining Christianity from the perspectives of God (theology), Christ (Christology) and Church (ecclesiology) all at once. The first theme on creation discusses Christian ideas about the creator God. The second on kingdom deals with ideas about Jesus, especially the thrust of his life and ministry, namely his preaching and teaching. The third on mission examines the workings of the Holy Spirit as seen through the ministry of the church, especially her role in the contemporary world in the midst of religious pluralism.

The present volume is composed of essays from a diversity of voices, representing the variety of ecclesial traditions within Christianity, as well as geographical and social locations across the World Church. I will thus be reflecting on the three themes mentioned above from within my own tradition and taking into account my own contextual realities, specifically a

Roman Catholic worldview with a generic Asian lens. To that end I will be employing the works of a key theological voice from the Roman Catholic tradition, namely Edward Schillebeeckx, to elucidate the foundations for mission as seen through the creation and kingdom-centered approaches. Not only is Schillebeeckx one of the most prominent theologians of the last century, he is also acknowledged as the first Roman Catholic theologian to engage with Biblical exegesis and employ the Historical-Critical method in his works of theology. Moreover, he was one of the architects who helped in the renewal of the Catholic Church in the 1960s and has since been remembered as almost synonymous with the new theology resulting from the Second Vatican Council. The chapter, therefore, looks at the ideals of Roman Catholic theology as promoted by this great ecumenical council and developed across the globe in the last half-century.

A Word About Theological Method

I begin by noting from the outset that each theological method has its own starting point and, in the words of Bernard Lonergan, has its own 'normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results'.¹ As such, it befits the chapter at this early stage to spell out my own theological method so as to disclose the normative patterns of recurrent and related operations that will be employed throughout. This is also a way of briefly introducing the three themes that will be elaborated upon later.

Firstly, the methodological option for a creation-centered theology is taken in contradistinction to the redemption-centered theology that is often more pervasive in Christian theological literature.² This is an anthropological option one adopts and which then shapes one's thinking, yielding very particular cumulative and progressive results. Specifically, a creation-centered approach helps determine one's view of the world, of human nature and of life in general. It takes as starting point the Priestly account of creation as found in the first chapter of Genesis, highlighting the emphatic reference to the goodness of creation. God created that which was good and the universe and all within, including human beings, are graced with this goodness and beauty of creation. This creation story is more an account of the Christian idea and image of who God is and especially how God relates to the world, with a special focus on the last of God's creation, viz., human beings. By contrast, a redemption-centered approach takes as starting point the second creation story of the Yahwist school as found in the second and third chapters of Genesis. Here it is the sin of Adam and

¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 4.

² See Stephen B Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (rev ed, Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2004), 21.

Eve, the brokenness of human beings and the doctrine of the Fall which capture headlines. As a result of this Fall and the banishment of humankind from Eden the world and all within is in a depraved condition. It is thus in need of redemption which, for Christians, comes only through Christ, the risen saviour of the world.

This leads us to the second methodological option, which is that of a kingdom-centered approach. This option is taken as opposed to a Jesus-centered or Christ-centered approach to Christology.³ The Jesus-centered approach is one which focuses on Jesus as the one and only saviour. Its perspective is that only those who acknowledge him as such will attain salvation. Some versions of it insist that salvation is only possible for those who explicitly accept the Christian faith and belong to a faith community after having been baptized within the church. All other religions do not have the power to bring peoples to salvation, despite the good which may be contained in them. The Christ-centered approach, on the other hand, focuses not so much on the historical person of Jesus but on the Christ of Christian faith. The belief here is that other religions can mediate salvation for their adherents but that it is the universal Christ who enables this. It is either because Christ is secretly working through these religions or that they are ultimately directed or perfected through Christ. As such, salvation, even if it is through the other religions, is ultimately mediated through Christ and the people, unknown to them, are actually 'anonymous Christians'. In contrast to these two approaches the kingdom-centered approach places its focus not so much on the person of Jesus or the Christ of faith but on Jesus Christ's preaching and teaching. Specifically, its take is that the thrust of Christology is Jesus' teaching and ministry, which was reinforced through the example of his life and which can best be captured by the theme of the coming of God's kingdom. Also known as the Reign of God, the kingdom of God is a situation where love, justice and peace reign, both 'on earth as in heaven', as Jesus taught in the Lord's Prayer. Such an understanding of the kingdom was not only the concern of Jesus but of many other religious leaders as well. The Buddha, Mahavira, Confucius, Muhammad, and others preached a very similar message. The kingdom-centered approach, therefore, focuses not so much on Jesus or on Christ but on the salvific message taught by Jesus Christ, as well as the other world's religious leaders.

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This is where the third methodological option for mission takes a shift from the more traditional *missio ad gentes* (mission 'to' the nations) to that of *missio inter-gentes* (mission 'among' the nations).⁴ The former is

³ A lot has already been written on this tripartite model. One of the most comprehensive surveys can be found in Paul F Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religion* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002).

⁴ Jonathan Y Tan, 'Missio Inter Gentes: Towards a New Paradigm in the Mission Theology of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)', *Mission Studies* 21:1 (2004), 65-95.

mission undertaken in the spirit of Matthew 28:19 ('Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit') for the purpose of preaching Jesus and the message of salvation which Christ alone brings to a world in need of redemption. It is mission to those who do not yet believe or those who have not heard the Gospel and its ultimate objective is that of saving souls and planting new churches. The other option, which will be elaborated upon in this chapter, is mission 'among' the nations. It is mission which the Christian participates in together and with people of other religions. It is undertaken in the spirit of Matthew 25:35 ('for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me') for the purpose of building up God's kingdom here on earth first. Convinced that Jesus came to bring 'life in all its fullness' (Jn 10:10) and that the Christian's task, according to Matthew 6:33, is to 'strive first for the kingdom of God', the missionary sees her/his role as not only in sharing the Gospel of eternal life but also in mending the broken bodies of the earthly life. In this regard people of other religions are looked upon not so much as objects or targets of mission but as the Christian's collaborator and partner. This is premised on the fact that in the ministry of healing and of fighting against injustice and the alleviation of suffering and oppression the Christian cannot do it alone. *Mammon* is too gargantuan a task for Christians; they need the assistance of other persons of goodwill. Partnership and dialogue with these other goodwill forces is seen, therefore, as integral to the Christian's mission and the new way of living in true discipleship in Christ.

God and Creation

The philosophical tradition which undergirds a creation-centered theology is that of Thomism. Drawing on Aristotelian philosophy, Thomism is basically a philosophical theology which begins on the premise that created beings are in participation with nature as with grace. Because the created human participates in the creator God, it is therefore possible for the human being to know God. This knowledge can only come through creation, which means it can only come through our senses, through the physical realm. Robert Schreiter summarizes it thus: 'God communicates with us through the medium of the created world and not through some other channel. That relative optimism means that, sinful and broken though the world may be, it remains the medium for this divine-human communication.'⁵

As a Dominican schooled in the Thomist tradition, Edward Schillebeeckx speaks of God as 'essentially creator, the lover of the finite,

⁵ Robert Schreiter (ed), *The Schillebeeckx Reader* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 20.

loving with the absoluteness of a divine love which is unfathomable to us'.⁶ This theme of God as creator occupies a foundational role in Schillebeeckx's theology. He has often remarked that the doctrine of creation is the 'foundation of all theology'⁷ and serves as the 'background and horizon of all Christian belief'.⁸ This doctrine is rooted in the Pentateuch's understanding of God: Yahweh Lord is 'a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness' (Ex 34: 6). It follows that this God who is gracious and merciful cannot but want to freely share God's love in creation. Creation is thus an act of love on God's part and, more importantly, 'an act of God's trust in man'.⁹ The divine trust is an unconditional free gift, offered to 'Adam' or all of humankind for no reason other than because God chooses to trust in creation. In response, the human person's role and duty is to be responsible for and in the service of the world and the rest of humanity. But, just as Adam fell and acted irresponsibly in the discharge of his duty, humankind is also liable – indeed, prone – to fall and to failure. As a result, they are punished, but with a punishment which does not seem to be commensurate with the gravity of the failure. God remains merciful and gracious.

Essentially, the doctrine of creation teaches that 'God is God, the sun is the sun, the moon is the moon and man is man'.¹⁰ Each has its own place and each has its own particular nature. As creator, God creates only that which is 'not divine' and, therefore, 'not God'. It follows that all creation is by nature not perfect, not omnipotent, not infinite, not immortal and not absolute. Creation is, by extension, subject to making mistakes, being weak and even to committing sinful and evil acts. Such is the condition of what it means to be created, a condition of finitude. Creation is even allowed to be as it pleases, without intervention from God. Schillebeeckx at times speaks of the 'impotence of God', an impotence willed freely by God.¹¹ God is not necessarily in charge of or in control of everything in the universe, nor does God want to be so. The world and humanity cannot expect God to come to the rescue at all times and in all circumstances. They certainly cannot expect God to save them from finitude or from all that finitude entails. That is not what salvation is about. God created the world in such a way that the world will never be able to be 'not-finite'. It is in the nature of the world to be finite and thus imperfect. Transformation, however, is possible.

The transformation of the world and the planning for a better society are all in the hands of finite men and women who are free to develop the world

⁶ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 181.

⁷ Edward Schillebeeckx, *I Am a Happy Theologian: Conversations with Francesco Strazzari* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 47.

⁸ Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 90.

⁹ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report* (London: SCM Press, 1980), 106.

¹⁰ Schillebeeckx, *Interim*, 113.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 115.

as they see fit. Human beings, having free will and the freedom of choice, can choose between a variety of alternatives, except that these must be within the bounds of finitude – as metaphorically represented in Genesis by Adam not being able to eat of the tree of good and evil. This finitude is looked upon as an intrinsic merit and essential goodness and not as some kind of flaw or shortcoming. It would be a ‘mistake’, therefore, if ‘finitude is regarded as a wound, something which need not really have been’.¹² Such mistaken ideologies are also wont to attribute finitude to some other cause or demonic power or to regard it as a result of some primal sin. The book of Job clearly testifies against such views. Other parts of the Bible are also clearly against regarding finitude as unwelcome, as represented by the story of the Tower of Babel. A desire to be like God and wanting to transcend the finitude and contingency of life ‘is arrogance which alienates man from himself, the world and nature’.¹³ Schillebeeckx regards such desires as the ‘fundamental human sin’ as they are attempts to challenge God’s creation by disowning one’s human nature. Unfortunately, it is a sin repeated over and over throughout the course of human history, even until today.

While on the one hand there is the recognition of the finitude of humanity, on the other there is also the affirmation of the infinity of God, the transcendent reality. Limitation and contingency are the very elements which distinguish between the creator God from created beings. This creator, who is God of omnipotent love and absolute presence, manifests the attributes of God within the finite. Belief in the creator God situates the human being within a condition of limitation and finitude, as well as within the presence of God’s absolute grace and mercy. This is not to imply that God will remove our finitude. Instead, our finitude can always be taken up into the presence of God who is gracious and merciful. Salvation from God, therefore, is not about God saving us from finitude or from the world of contingency but about God providing the strength and inspiration that will help us to lift ourselves up from the evil and suffering which so pervades the world. The doctrine of creation is, therefore, at once the doctrine of Salvation. God’s creation is the beginning of the history of salvation, just as the whole of creation is permeated with God’s saving intent.

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Jesus and Kingdom

As Christians we believe that our experience of creation and salvation is verified and given definitive form in the person of Jesus of Nazareth who through his life revealed to us ‘everything that is good in creation’.¹⁴ This, according to Schillebeeckx, is because Jesus is ‘the ultimate key to

¹² Ibid., 113.

¹³ Ibid., 114.

¹⁴ Philip Kennedy, *Schillebeeckx* (London: Chapman, 1993), 94.

understanding human existence' as in his life one sees 'the final promise of God's unconditional trust in mankind and the perfect human response to this divine trust'.¹⁵ It is in this sense that the Christian belief in the creator God is essentially bound to the belief in the person of Jesus as God's definitive salvation.

Jesus amplifies clearly the 'meaning of creation as the manifestation of God's nature, as the beginning of salvation, and, in biblical categories, as the inauguration of God's kingdom'.¹⁶ Schillebeeckx speaks of Jesus as 'concentrated creation... the man in whom the task of creation has been successfully accomplished'.¹⁷ Thus, it is through how the human Jesus lived his life and the message that he preached, as well as the circumstances surrounding his death and the apostolic witness of his resurrection, that we know God as 'liberating love for humanity, in a way which fulfils and transcends all human, personal, social and political expectations'.¹⁸

Christians see in Jesus who is 'personally human' God sharing in human history. Jesus is God being God in a human way in order to dwell among us as a human being. In the person of Jesus the kingdom of God comes very close to us since the kingdom is essentially connected with the person of Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁹ It is in this context that Schillebeeckx speaks of Jesus as 'parable of God and paradigm of humanity'.²⁰ In Jesus God's love story with humankind is told just as humanity's obedient and love response to God is recounted. In order to better understand the meaning of salvation from God, therefore, it is important that we first appreciate the life, teaching and witness of Jesus who was 'personally human'.

To begin with, the Gospels regard the 'kingdom of God' as central to the entire life and preaching of Jesus. Also called 'God's reign', 'rule of God' or '*basileia tou Theou*', it refers to God's 'unconditional and liberating sovereign love, in so far as this comes into being and reveals itself in the life of men and women who do God's will'.²¹ Schillebeeckx defines this kingdom as an 'already' and 'not yet', in that it is already experienced in the here and now, as well as something which awaits fulfillment. Where 'men and women encounter Jesus in faith, the sick are healed, demons are driven out, sinners are led to repentance and the poor discover their worth... the kingdom of God is experienced here and now both by Jesus and the one who encountered him'.²² On the other hand, 'the kingdom of God is [also] an eschatological event, still to come (Mk 14:25; Lk 22:15-18): the

¹⁵ Schillebeeckx, *Interim*, 109.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 111.

¹⁸ Ibid., 128.

¹⁹ Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 112.

²⁰ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Collins and Crossroad, 1979), 626.

²¹ Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 111.

²² Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 132-133.

eschatological feast lies in the future; Jesus participates in it with his disciples.²³ The whole of Jesus' message and praxis was about actualizing this kingdom of God, 'with the emphasis at once on its coming and on its coming close.'²⁴ The Gospel imperative that we 'strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you' (Mt 6:33) at once guides our exploration into the meaning of Jesus as does how Christian living is to be lived to its fullest.

The 'already and not yet' of the kingdom are linked, just as Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom and the conduct of his life are linked. They are related in such a way that the kingdom is already made present in Jesus' earthly life and that his earthly ministry is about actualizing the kingdom. Significantly, the coming of God's kingdom entails a *metanoia* on our part. This, Schillebeeckx asserts, is expressed in nothing less than a conversion to the actual praxis of the kingdom of God. This is the basis to why in the Lord's Prayer the clause 'your kingdom come' is immediately followed by 'your will be done on earth'. It suggests the imperative of orthopraxis or right conduct for God's reign to come.²⁵ The New Testament speaks not only of Jesus' teaching and proclamation but also of his associating with sinners, giving sight to the blind, healing the lame, associating with women and taking the side of the outcasts and the marginalized. In short, Jesus 'went about doing good' (Acts 10:38) as 'doing good' is God's cause, just as it is the human's cause. All of Jesus' activities – his miracles of healing and driving out of demons, his presence with the people, his offering and accepting invitations to table-fellowship, not just with his disciples but also with the publicans, the sinners and the outcasts – point to the offer of God's salvation and relationship with humankind. 'the intercourse of Jesus of Nazareth with his fellow-men is an offer of salvation-imparted-by-God; it has to do with the coming rule of God, as proclaimed by him.'²⁶

The connection between this orthopraxis and the reign of God is clearly evidenced in the many parables told by Jesus. For example, through the parables of the lost son (Lk 15:11-32), lost coin (Lk 15:8-10) and lost sheep (Mt 18:12-14; Lk 15:4-7) God's gracious love, especially for the lost and the marginalized, are brought to prominence. Through the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Mt 20:1-16) 'Jesus presents a very provocative picture of God: God remains free in handing out his gifts and favors.'²⁷ Schillebeeckx ultimately postulates Jesus himself as the 'parable of God.'²⁸ By this he refers to the ever unconventional and incomprehensible person of Jesus, his praxis and proclamation, characterized by 'the "shock" effect

²³ Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 150.

²⁴ Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 140.

²⁵ Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 152-153.

²⁶ Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 179.

²⁷ Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 179.

²⁸ Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 156.

[which] marks the ongoing sequence of his life'.²⁹ Through the parables and Jesus' praxis of the kingdom it seems clear that the kingdom of God is a totally new order of a relationship between God and humanity and between humanity themselves. The *basileia tou Theou* 'does not know the human logic of precise justice. Jesus wants to give hope to those who from a social and human point of view, according to our human rules, no longer have any hope'.³⁰ The only logic for Jesus, according to Schillebeeckx, is that the kingdom is essentially directed to the elevation of the poor and the outcast. This logic represents the principal criterion by which God's kingdom is discerned: 'Jesus' picture of God is determined by the thirsty, the stranger, the prisoner, the sick, the outcast; here he sees God (Mt 25).' Likewise, Jesus' actions and teachings are directed towards actualizing the picture of the world which God wills. In fact, the whole of Jesus' life can be seen as mutually interpreting and reinforcing God's salvific grace of creation. Similarly, the actions of the creator God and Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, can only be understood more fully in light of the subsequent mission of Jesus' disciples, the church, acting through God the Holy Spirit.

Church and Mission

From the outset, Schillebeeckx asserts that religions and churches are sacraments of God's salvation in the world. While they do not bring about salvation, they do serve as signs of God's offer of salvation. In other words, God's offer of salvation is indeed effected in the community through the ministries of the various churches and religions. This is in keeping with Schillebeeckx's thesis of *extra mundum nulla salus* ('outside the world there is no salvation') which assumes that salvation is achieved in and through the world wherein 'the religions are the place where men and women become explicitly aware of God's saving actions in history'.³¹ Schillebeeckx is explicit that religions other than Christianity are as much vehicles of God's salvific acts and 'ways of salvation'. He points to Vatican II's *Nostra Aetate* which reminds us that men and women look to different religions for the 'message of salvation and the opening of a way of salvation'.³²

On the basis of his historical and hermeneutical investigations Schillebeeckx proposes that the distinctiveness, uniqueness and foundation of Christianity 'lies in Jesus' message and praxis of the kingdom of God, with all its consequences'.³³ If this message and praxis of Jesus is to see its fruition in God's kingdom, then 'the history of Jesus' career must be continued in his disciples'. Without this continuity by the Christian

²⁹ Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 157.

³⁰ Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 117.

³¹ Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 12.

³² Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 160.

³³ Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 165.

community, the church, Jesus' proclamation and praxis will remain in 'a purely speculative, empty vacuum.'³⁴ 'Christ' will be no more than an honorific title if the redemption began in 'Jesus' is not continued but ends with his death and resurrection. 'It is not the confession "Jesus is Lord" (Rom 10:9) which in itself brings redemption, but "he who does the will of my Father" (Mt 7:21).'³⁵ If God's offer of salvation in Jesus is to be truly universal – meaning, that it is valid and open to all – then the churches have to be active in continuing Jesus' mission by following his way of life.

This means that Christians, the community of disciples, have to 'take upon themselves the aspirations of the wronged of this world and [be] in solidarity with the call for justice of poor and voiceless people.'³⁶ As justice and peace are the entitlements of all persons, and not only for Christians, the salvation in Jesus has to be universalized through Christian praxis. It is the mission of Christians, 'called to be God's holy people', to 'confess freedom from evil', to undertake 'the task of bringing justice' and to be filled with 'the courage to love'. Schillebeeckx is emphatic that 'the transformation of the world to a higher humanity, to justice and peace, is therefore an essential part of the 'catholicity' or universality of Christian faith; and this is *par excellence* a non-discriminatory universality.'³⁷

Schillebeeckx then adds that God – as revealed in Jesus of Nazareth – who is 'the creator, the foundation, source and horizon of the eschatological or final unity of world history', cannot remain the 'private possession of the Christian churches.' Rather, God must be the object and subject of Christian mission, where mission is never 'narrowed down to a form of collaboration in development' but a bearing witness to Jesus Christ as a means to furthering 'God's kingdom of justice and love throughout the world.'³⁸ Specifically, 'as prophet, the missionary must go and stand alongside the oppressed in the struggle which in fact is being carried on for more humanity and salvation.'³⁹ This is the witness to the gospel and this is the story which disciples of Jesus are asked to tell, in word as well as in deed. Bringing the gospel to the oppressed and the marginalized is effected 'not only through words but through solidarity in action and thus through a praxis of liberation.'⁴⁰

Mission, therefore, 'comprises evangelization and collaboration in development and the work of liberation: caritative and political diakonia.'⁴¹ In mission, the church – not synonymous with the kingdom – is 'given

³⁴ Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 168.

³⁵ Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 168.

³⁶ Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 169.

³⁷ Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 170.

³⁸ Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 183.

³⁹ Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 184.

⁴⁰ Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 185.

⁴¹ Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 184.

second place'.⁴² Having said that, it is still important for Christians to 'create new groups which also themselves hand on the torch and, in the footsteps of Jesus, share in God's saving initiative.' The notion of 'conversion' remains an important priority in Christian mission, except that it is understood in a non-discriminatory fashion and given to mean conversion to God's kingdom rather than to the Roman Catholic Church. Hence, 'the Christian message of the kingdom of God with its potential for liberation remains in its distinctive character an offer to all men and women.'⁴³ Individuals, as well as whole cultures and religions, can be evangelized and challenged to a more authentic conversion in view of furthering the kingdom of God. All religions, including Christianity and the Catholic Church, stand in need of such evangelization and challenge from one another and from all persons of goodwill.

Schillebeeckx's ecclesiology, therefore, insists that the mission of the church has to include the praxis of faith, in anticipation of the kingdom of God, the salvation for all. It is to invite all persons to 'actually realizing salvation and liberation for all, in freedom, through a praxis in accordance with the gospel, in the steps of Jesus.'⁴⁴ Such a theology espouses what can be regarded as the 'partnership' model of mission, where the other religions are looked upon as partners and collaborators in the mission towards bringing about God's kingdom. Dialogue among the religions, therefore, is not only useful but necessary. It is only through dialogue that the church can discover the fuller aspects of God's will for humankind. In dialogue the church 'allows itself to be challenged by other religions and challenges them in return on the basis of its own message.'⁴⁵

Missio Inter-Gentes and Dialogue

Such an understanding of mission sees the church as having a new role in the world, viz., to promote dialogue in the religiously pluralistic world. In this regard it is the task of the Asian Church to take the lead since Asia is privileged with a hermeneutical situation where the church exists in the midst of the many living religions of the world. To explore this I refer to the works of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), an institution which represents the Catholic Church from all across Asia. In particular, at the very first FABC Plenary Assembly in 1974, in discussing the theme of 'Evangelization in Modern Day Asia', the bishops defined the task of evangelization as follows:

⁴² Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 183.

⁴³ Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 185.

⁴⁴ Schillebeeckx, *Church*, 176.

⁴⁵ Edward Schillebeeckx, 'The Religious and the Human Ecumene', in Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Language of Faith: Essays on Jesus, Theology, and the Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), 256-257.

In Asia especially this involves a dialogue with the great religious traditions of our peoples. In this dialogue we accept them as significant and positive elements in the economy of God's design of salvation. In them we recognize and respect profound spiritual and ethical meanings and values. Over many centuries they have been the treasury of the religious experience of our ancestors, from which our contemporaries do not cease to draw light and strength. They have been (and continue to be) the authentic expression of the noblest longings of their hearts, and the home of their contemplation and prayer. They have helped to give shape to the histories and cultures of our nations (§14).⁴⁶

An examination of FABC documents, a product of the post-Vatican II spirit of openness to the world, reveals that the concept of 'dialogue' features prominently in the Asian Church's theology. Throughout the 40 years of FABC's existence this theme of dialogue has been emerging at practically every assembly and seminar, prompting Felix Wilfred to assert that the word 'dialogue' can more or less summarize the entire orientation of the FABC.⁴⁷ Dialogue is the way of being church in Asia. Dialogue is also the method of doing theology in Asia. In short, dialogue is the life and mode of the Asian Church. Thus, in its *Missio Inter-Gentes* the task of the church has to be through the process of dialogue, where the term 'dialogue' is used loosely to refer to the interactions, relationships and involvement between one group and another.

In particular, the church, as disciples of Jesus, can engage in this dialogue by walking in the footsteps of him who humbled himself in order to serve the poor and the oppressed of his time. The events which took place at Jordan and Calvary are significant markers from which the church can learn. Significantly, it was at the river Jordan that Jesus received his first baptism. This was a baptism into the religiousness of the culture of his time. Following in the footsteps of Jesus the church has to also take this first step, which is to submit itself to a baptism by the river of the world's religiousness. In effect this means that the church must be extensively immersed and involved with the other religions. The second baptism, the one of Calvary, which Jesus received is even more significant. In current ecclesial language one could refer to it as the sacrament of confirmation. It was a confirmation of all of Jesus' signs, preaching, teachings and actions which began with the baptism of water at Jordan and which ended with his execution in what Aloysius Pieris calls 'the baptism of the cross'. It is not without connection that prior to arriving on Calvary Jesus' journey had

⁴⁶ Gaudencio Rosales and CG Arévalo (eds), *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, Documents from 1970 to 1991, vol. 1* (Quezon City: Claretian, 1997), 14.

⁴⁷ Felix Wilfred, 'The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC): Orientations, Challenges and Impact', in Gaudencio Rosales and CG Arévalo (eds), *For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, Documents from 1970 to 1991, vol. 1*, xxiii.

taken him through terrains where he had openly challenged the *status quo* and ruling elites.⁴⁸ This is something members of all religions share in and it is here that the church can build up a partnership with them.

This, then, is the task of the church as co-creators with the creator God. Its mission is one amongst the people and in partnership with all persons of goodwill in building up the kingdom of God for which Jesus preached and died. Such is the *Missio Inter-Gentes* and such is the new way of being church in a religiously pluralistic society.



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⁴⁸ Aloysius Pieris, *God's Reign for God's Poor: A Return to the Jesus Formula* (Kelaniya: Tulana Research Centre, 1999), 49.

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PART FOUR

**THE BIBLE, THEOLOGY
AND EXPERIENCE
TOGETHER**

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ROMAN CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVES ON FOUNDATIONS FOR MISSION

Robert Schreiter

The theology articulated in the 'Foundations of Mission' chapter¹ reflects in many ways the Roman Catholic experience of mission over the past 75 years. This should not be surprising, given the close ecumenical involvement of Roman Catholics with Protestant and Orthodox theologians around the topic of mission. This has culminated in the Roman Catholic Church being a full member of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism for some years.

The following reflections will attempt to describe some of the specific contours by which Roman Catholics envision mission today when seen through the lens of what has emerged in the document. In order to position these remarks, I will begin here with a brief overview of the development of thinking on mission in the Roman Catholic Church since the 1950s. This will set the scene for a closer look at the foundations of mission (experience, Bible, theology) in order to focus then on the three themes of mission as liberation, as dialogue, and as reconciliation.

Developments in Roman Catholic Theology of Mission

The turning point for developments in Roman Catholic theology of mission in the twentieth century was without doubt the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Before that time, the shape of mission was determined by two distinctive (though not opposed) schools of thought, identified with the Universities of Münster and Louvain, respectively. Their focus was on the purpose of mission, from which then an appropriate theology would flow. In Münster, where a chair of missiology was established in 1911, the motive for mission was seen as the salvation of souls who, through hearing the Word of God and accepting baptism, would now be counted among God's elect. In Louvain, on the other hand, the emphasis was on establishing the church, through which salvation would then come.

The breakthrough to a new understanding of mission is evidenced in the Second Vatican Council's Decree on the Missionary Activity of the

¹ Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim, *Witnessing to Christ Today* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010), 10-33.

Church, *Ad gentes*, in 1965. There the concept of mission was put in a Trinitarian focus. Mission is the work of the Holy Trinity in the world: through creation, by the Father; through the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit into the world for its salvation and sanctification. It is easy to see that this notion of mission clearly parallels the understanding of the *missio Dei* that had been growing in ecumenical circles since the 1950s. Mission thus becomes our participation in the work of God in the world, building upon God's act of creation, embracing the salvation God has given us in Christ, and working toward the eventual reconciliation of all creation with God at the end of time. This had profound implications for the understanding of the church. On this view, mission is not one of the functions of the church, but rather the church is seen as at the service of God's mission, a mission encapsulated in Jesus' preaching of the coming of the Reign of God. The church is not an end in itself; rather it is the principal means through which God's plan for the world is effected.

A second shift in the Roman Catholic understanding of mission came in another document of the Council, its Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra aetate*. In this document, the Council declared that the church acknowledges what is good and holy in those religious traditions. This was a clear step forward in relationship to those traditions, a step that made the possibility of dialogue with them possible. At the same time, the document (as did other statements in the Council documents, notably in *Lumen gentium*, 16) did not specify the implications of this acknowledgment for understanding the salvific value of those traditions. As we shall see, this remains one of the most contested areas in Roman Catholic theology of mission to this day. In the wake of the Council Pope Paul VI opened the Secretariat for Non-Christians in the Roman Curia (now known as the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue).

At the most official level, two papal documents issued in the years after the Council need to be noted for their impact on the Catholic understanding of mission. In 1975 Pope Paul VI issued his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* as a result of the Synod of Bishops' meeting on the theme of evangelization in the previous year. This has remained a signal document for Roman Catholic missiology. It is noteworthy first of all, for its recognition of the complexity of the evangelization process, especially as it relates to culture. Evangelization is more than verbal proclamation. It requires an examination of the culture of those to whom the Gospel is presented and concentrates not simply on the conversion of individual souls, but on the evangelization of the culture itself. This has come to be read as an invitation to examine social structures as well as individuals in the process of evangelization. Also of note is the fact that the word 'liberation' appears for the first time in a papal document. What emerges from all of this is a theology of mission that represents a greater sensitivity

to the full texture of the process of evangelization rather than focusing merely on the encounter within a direct proclamation of the Gospel.

The other papal document was from the hand of John Paul II: his 1990 encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, subtitled 'On the permanent validity of the church's missionary mandate'. As the subtitle indicates, the encyclical reflects a concern that proclamation had given way to other forms of mission in which the Gospel was not explicitly and verbally presented to those who have not heard. As such it reflects the impact of developments in missionary activity at the grassroots level, about which more will be presented below. However, the encyclical is more than an admonition against neglecting direct proclamation. It presents a very subtle presentation of the role of the Holy Spirit in mission, perhaps the most extensive to have been presented in an official document regarding mission. While keeping the action of the Spirit closely linked to the work of the Son and affirming that the Spirit's work is never separate from that of the Son, it nonetheless, in the eyes of some, opened the way toward understanding how the Trinity might be at work in other religious traditions. The encyclical likewise called for a 'New Evangelization', especially in the public spaces of today's world. A New Evangelization is intended to revitalize the faith of those whose belief in Christ has grown tepid. Pope Benedict XVI has made the New Evangelization, especially referring to Europe, a central theme in his papacy. In 2010, he opened a new office to pursue this goal in the Roman Curia, the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization.

Alongside these official milestones in the journey toward a fuller theological understanding of mission stands the experience of missionaries in the field. The impact of the independence movements that ended colonization in much of Africa in the 1950s and 1960s led to a profound questioning of the motives of Christian mission in those territories. The call from Africa for a 'moratorium' on foreign mission, first issued in Protestant circles, found profound resonance among Catholics as well. Throughout the 1970s there was a profound questioning of mission – at least in its sense of proclamation for the sake of conversion. Could evangelization be separated realistically from a simultaneous 'Westernization' of faith for non-Western people? Meanwhile a profound identification with the people (captured in Latin America in the word *inserción*) laid the groundwork for a more complex form of evangelization that is mirrored in *Evangelii nuntiandi*. By the end of the 1970s, the concept of 'inculturation' became a central way of speaking of the encounter with local cultures, especially in Africa and the Pacific Islands. In Asia, on the other hand, this profound identification took the form of dialogue with the other great religious traditions which Christians encountered there.

A signal moment for the Catholic understanding of mission came in 1981, when SEDOS, a documentation and research institute founded by mission-sending religious orders in Rome, organized a ten-day seminar that

brought together theologians, superiors of those religious orders, and grassroots missionaries to ponder the meaning and direction of Catholic mission. The result of this was a programme of research that saw mission being carried out in four distinct but interrelated ways: as proclamation, as dialogue, as inculturation, and as the liberation of the poor.² This in effect ended the decade of questioning the meaning and purpose of mission in Catholic missionary circles. All four of these were seen as mission in the sense that *Ad gentes* had given it as participation in the work of the Trinitarian God in the world for the sake of the world. Indeed, this fourfold sense of mission continues to shape missionary consciousness at the grassroots level and in the mission-sending religious orders down to the present time.

This fourfold sense of mission caused concerns at the highest levels of the church, to the extent that it appeared to attenuate traditional understandings of mission as proclamation and conversion. This was already noted in regard to the publication of *Redemptoris missio*. At almost the same time of its publication, a joint document of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, entitled 'Dialogue and Proclamation', explored the intricate interaction of dialogue and proclamation in the Catholic understanding of mission. Mission as dialogue – which sees dialogue as a value in itself, and not as a surreptitious form of proselytism – has become central to the thinking of both bishops' conferences and missionary orders in Asia, where in most countries Christians constituted a tiny minority (and were likely to remain so). Dialogue with Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam was seen as a legitimate way of witnessing to the Gospel message, even if it did not lead to the conversion of people in those traditions.

Mission as inculturation found special resonance in Africa, where Christian faith had to interact with local traditions. Later, in the 1990s, it took root in Latin America as well in the encounter with indigenous traditions there (the *teologia india*). To a lesser extent it has found a place in Asia, generally in interaction with local cultures less affected by the great religious traditions.

The liberation of the poor found widespread resonance in Latin America, especially under the experience of oppression cause by the widespread military dictatorships on that continent from the mid-1960s through the 1970s. It picked up especially the references to the church of the poor that had surfaced during the Second Vatican Council, and the call to work for justice found in Pope Paul VI's 1966 encyclical *Populorum progressio*, as well as the 1970 Synod of Bishops' document *Justice in the World*. It was inspired in Latin America especially by the continent-wide meeting of the

² Joseph Lang and Mary Motte (eds), *Mission in Dialogue: The Sedos Research Seminar on the Future of Mission, March 8-19, 1981* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982).

bishops at Medellín in 1968. From Latin America, the interest in mission as liberation of the poor from social and political oppression spread to the continents of Asia and Africa, and among minority groups in North America as well. The theology of liberation, that undergirded this approach to mission, came under pressure from the Vatican starting in the mid-1970s, even as the Pope acknowledged the profound evils it was trying to address. Although the explicit language of the theology of liberation is now less in evidence, its concerns continue to animate missionary activity for Catholics around the world.

The most recent arrival on the field of Catholic understandings of mission has been mission as reconciliation. This idea grew out of the experience of the upsurge of armed conflicts that marked the end of the Cold War in the 1990s. Missionaries and local church leaders found themselves caught in local situations of violence that often had no clear beginning nor end. The theme of reconciliation grew particularly strong in those years, both in secular and religious circles. The Vatican participated with a full delegation in the CWME's 2005 Assembly that had as its theme 'Come Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile' and devoted the 2009 Synod of Bishops to the question of reconciliation in Africa.

The Use of 'Models' for Understanding Contemporary Mission

As one can see from this brief overview, the second half of the twentieth century produced considerable ferment in the understanding of mission in Catholic circles, parallel for the most part to what was happening in Protestant circles. This plurality of understandings of mission does not allow for a reduction of the meaning of mission to a single concept or single mode of operation. Instead it moves toward a concept of models of mission as a way of respecting the integrity of contemporary mission's different forms, yet at the same time providing means for communication and mutual interaction among them. While the language of 'models' is not used at the highest official levels of the Catholic Church, it has become widespread in theology and among missiologists. The US theologian Avery Dulles first used this approach in his 1974 book *Models of the Church*,³ where he outlined five different theologies of the church then present in theological discussion (he was to add a sixth model later on). The use of models clearly influenced the fourfold approach to mission that came out of the 1981 SEDOS seminar. And its influence is evident in what is the most authoritative work on Catholic mission thus far in the twenty-first century – Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder's *Constants in Context*.⁴ There, under

³ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974).

⁴ Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (American Society of Missiology Series: Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004).

the general heading of mission as ‘prophetic dialogue’, they outline six models of mission: Witness and Proclamation; Pursuit of Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation; Liturgy, Prayer, and Contemplation; Interreligious Dialogue; Inculturation; and Reconciliation. In many ways, thinking in models is congruent with the importance of analogy in Catholic theology, where analogy always reflects at once similarity and difference in the way it gives expression to a larger reality. US theologian David Tracy and US sociologist Andrew Greeley have spoken of Catholics having an ‘analogical imagination’ that is rooted in a sacramental view of the world, as evidencing the presence of God’s grace in the world. This they compare to what they see as a ‘dialectical imagination’ among Protestants, a view that stresses the distance between God and the world.⁵

Foundations of a Theology of Mission: Experience, Bible, Theology

The Foundations of Mission chapter speaks of three foundations of a theology of mission: experience, Bible, and theology. These are all affirmed in the developments of Catholic understandings of mission at the present time. What follows is an attempt to show their complex interrelation.

Experience

The various forms of Catholic theology in general are not of a single mind on the place of experience in theology. Until well into the twentieth century, personal experience was not seen as a reliable *locus theologicus*. That human beings were sinful creatures, constantly in need of God’s grace, made using their experience as a point of departure in theology a doubtful undertaking. The transcendental theologies of Karl Rahner and others pioneered the possibility of taking individual experience more seriously in reflecting how human beings come to know God. Experience and divine revelation were brought into dialogue with one another, thus bringing human experience into a more privileged position than it had enjoyed before.

However, the ‘anthropocentric turn’ that marked twentieth century Catholic and mainline Protestant theology necessitated taking experience more seriously as a genuine partner in the construction of theology. By beginning with the human person as the principal actor in the development of a theology, human experience had to take a larger role. Here the use of existential and phenomenological philosophies had a profound effect on Catholic theology, as these replaced the Neo-Scholastic and Thomistic

⁵ David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981); Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

philosophies that had been the principal dialogue partner of Catholic theology. The Protestant theologian Paul Tillich's introduction of a method of 'correlation' (a human question is responded to by a Christian answer) helped provide a framework for doing theology in a different way. In Latin America, the use of the 'see-judge-act' methodology for social action, first developed in Europe in the Young Christian Workers' movement, provided a more on-the-ground way of incorporating experience into theology in a new kind of way. In Europe, the theologies of Edward Schillebeeckx and Johann Baptist Metz brought these correlational methods into the mainstream. In Latin America, the rise of liberation theology codified it for that part of the world.

Consequently, whatever place that experience may take in other domains of Catholic theology, it certainly holds a very important place in Catholic theology of mission. The models of mission that were developed in the second half of the twentieth century were all driven for the main part by the experience of missionaries. Perhaps mission, as an action-oriented field, contributes to a certain primacy that experience seems to hold.

This role of experience in mission is not just something associated with the turbulence and renewal that marked Catholic mission in the latter part of the twentieth century. It is something that is likely to continue into the future. In that regard, let me give but one example where experience may once again be pushing the boundaries of Catholic thinking on mission.

The example has to do with understandings of belonging and syncretism. Syncretism has been a negative concept in Christian theology in general, seen as pointing to a mixing of Christian and non-Christian traditions and practices in such a way that Christian identity and orthodoxy come to be blurred or lost. In the social sciences, on the other hand, syncretism can have both positive and negative connotations. In its positive dimension, syncretism is simply descriptive of the borrowing and change that go on between cultures all the time. What may begin as an alien feature gradually comes to be accepted as part of common practice or belief. Take for example the Christmas tree. A relic of pre-Christian Germanic religion, where the evergreen tree is seen as a religious symbol, it is now associated so strongly with the Christian celebration of Christmas far beyond Northern Europe – even in China and Japan. Its original foreignness is long forgotten.

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At the same time, syncretism can contain very negative connotations, when Christian symbols and practices disappear into a completely different framework. A case can be made that what has happened in Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Caribbean religions is such a case: Christian saints are appropriated into the rites, but disappear largely into the *orishas* or spiritual figures of Yoruba and other West African religions.

Here, the experience of Christians in Africa and Asia (and among indigenous peoples in the Americas) presents a challenge to the theology of mission. From an historical point of view, it is now well known that pre-

Christian religious practices in Europe did not disappear with the advent of Christianity. Some of these practices and many of the religious sites of pre-Christian European religion were incorporated into Christianity itself, while others continued a parallel, semi-clandestine existence. This continuance was not a matter of a few years, but often centuries, even a millennium. With the rapid growth of Christianity in Africa and Asia in the twentieth century, one should therefore not be surprised that other religious practices continue alongside 'new' Christian belief. Sometimes explicit efforts are made to incorporate them, as the appropriation of understandings of the African spirit world into the 'spiritual warfare' models of some Pentecostal Christianity. Elsewhere we see the practice of 'Christianity by day and by night' wherein Western Christian practices are followed in daylight, and traditional practices continue in a quasi-hidden fashion.

In Asia, where (say) Buddhism is so deeply intertwined with East and Southeast Asian cultures, one can discover patterns of double or multiple religious belonging. In such settings Christians feel themselves at once to be both Christian and Buddhist. When one departs from Western philosophy's principle of non-contradiction and embraces an Asian view that opposites can live in harmony, one is confronted with rethinking what belonging and identity mean in these contexts. The pluralist cultures that globalization is bringing to many parts of the world, along with the experience of reconfiguration of societies through migration, suggest that rethinking of traditional understandings of syncretism will soon be in order. Catholic Christianity, with its long history of popular religious practices existing alongside office liturgical rites, may be in a special position within World Christianity to take up this question.

Bible

The Bible has been a rich resource in the renewal of Catholic mission, especially in the English-speaking world. A series of comprehensive studies, as well as more focused ones, have helped reshape thinking about mission.⁶ This is partially due to the renewal of the place the Bible takes in Catholic theology as promoted in the Vatican Council Constitution *Dei verbum* and the work of the Pontifical Biblical Commission. The Neo-Scholastic way of doing theology that deduced theology from certain theses, and then used the Bible mainly as an ensemble of proofs for those theses, continues to exist in Catholic theology but has yielded its place to a more biblically based approach. That is evident already in the *missio Dei* theology of the conciliar document *Ad gentes*. Likewise, there is a much

⁶ See for example Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Biblical Foundations of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982); Lucien LeGrand, *Unity and Plurality: Mission in the Bible* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990); James Chukwuma Okoye, *Israel and the Nations: A Mission Theology of the Old Testament* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005).

more conscious effort to explore models of mission within the Scriptures themselves as indicators for contemporary mission, without presuming to transpose them literally into the contemporary context.

In the combine of foundations of experience, Bible, and theology for contemporary Catholic understandings of mission, one may have to note two levels on which they interact. If one looks to contemporary Catholic missiological writing, a biblical basis for theologies of mission is unmistakably there. But a continuing and close interaction with biblical texts, such as one might see in contemporary Evangelical theological writing, is not likely to be present, unless a professional biblical exegete is penning the text. However, conversation with biblical texts continues to animate new efforts in Catholic missiology.

Again, one example may suffice. Many authors have noted how attention has shifted over the course of time to different biblical texts that serve as a motivation for mission. David Bosch noted how Luke 14:23 ('Make them come in') served as a biblical motivation for mission from Augustine through the early modern period.⁷ Attention to that text prompted certain modes of missionary behaviour: the importance of membership in the church, a rejection of anything that seemed to be 'outside' the church, and an immediate and complete conversion to Christian faith. Matthew 28:19-20, the so-called 'Great Commission', dominated thinking about mission motivation throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth centuries. With the advent especially of a model of mission as centring on justice for the poor, Luke 4:18-19 has come into prominence (the synagogue speech of Jesus, based on Isaiah 60). With reconciliation as a motivation for mission establishing itself in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, 2 Corinthians 5:17-20 and Ephesians 2:12-20 suggest themselves especially. Liberation and reconciliation suggest patterns of action for mission, and prompt as well a return to the Scriptures to deepen each of these concepts.

Theology

Finally, there is theology itself. Mission came to be theorized in a systematic way in Catholic theology only in the twentieth century with the development of missiology as a theological discipline.⁸ The importance of such theorization fulfils both a theological and practical purpose. At the level of theology, it is important to be able to situate mission within a larger understanding of God's work in the world, and God's intentions for the

⁷ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (American Society of Missiology Series: Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), Part II.

⁸ Perhaps the earliest work in this regard was Joseph Schmidlin, *Einführung in die Missionwissenschaft* (Münster: Verlag der Asschendorfschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1917).

world. The shifts elaborated at the Second Vatican Council – toward the *missio Dei*, toward a more positive understanding of the church's relation to the world, and toward a new approach to other religions – required a rethinking of mission, a process that is far from complete in Catholic theological circles. This entails theological reflection and expression. This is evident in the difference between, say, how Vatican documents on mission are presented and organized compared with those coming out of Evangelical Protestant mission circles. Theological expression is highly valued. At a practical level, the formation of missionaries and the evaluation of their missionizing efforts require a foundation upon which to build and a framework within which to act. As new challenges present themselves (e.g., climate change and possible crises around food and water), mission needs to be rethought: not just in terms of what is 'effective', but also and especially what is 'faithful' to what God has revealed in Jesus Christ.

In the combine of foundations – experience, Bible, and theology – theology has a primacy in Catholic missiology in terms of normativity; that is, it stands as a final arbiter on the quality of concepts of mission and statements derived from those concepts. To that extent, experience and Bible present what might be called necessary, but not sufficient foundations for mission. A Catholic theology of mission is unthinkable without an appeal to experience and to the Bible. Yet in the final analysis, they have to come together in a theology that is coherent with the larger Catholic tradition, as well as the biblical witness. At the same time, a theology might be presented that is not comprehensive enough of the issues missionaries face in their concrete experience. The examples of syncretism and biblical motivations for mission given above point to areas where a theology has to make further advances if it is to be adequate to the missionary task of the church today. Hence, theology can never be seen as self-sufficient apart from appeals to experience and to the Bible.

An example where theology of mission has not yet achieved its full task can be found in the question of the relation of Christianity to non-Christian religions. As was noted above, the Second Vatican Council's Declaration *Nostra aetate* opened the door to a new rethinking of what salvation in Christ means vis-à-vis these other traditions, but left the question open. As time has gone on, the urgency of responding to this question has become more acute. Not only relations between Christians and people of other faiths in Asia prompt a greater urgency, but also the impact of an increasing religious pluralism in societies on other continents due to migration and the political demonization of Islam make this more than an intellectual matter.

The theological question has been posed mainly from a Christological and soteriological perspective; namely, what is the meaning of the salvation wrought for the world by God in Jesus Christ vis-à-vis the claims of other religious traditions to ultimacy? If one looks at this question from a purely dogmatic perspective, one could note that it is being framed by the

missiology that predominated up to the time of the Second Vatican Council: the salvation of souls and the role of the church. More recently another approach has been suggested that places the question in the framework of a theology of religious pluralism: if these other religious traditions persist in the face of the intense evangelization efforts of Christian missionaries, do those traditions have some role in God's larger plan for the world? What is notable about this approach is that it is more consonant with a *missio Dei* theological approach: trying to understand what the Trinitarian God is doing in and for the world. Mission theologies of reconciliation may, from one perspective, be a framework in which this might be further explored. These theologies might deal not only with the aftermath of conflict, but with a more cosmic vision of God's plan for the world – at least as well as we feeble humans, with the help of grace, might be able to understand it.

In the course of this chapter all three models of mission mentioned in the conclusion to Foundations for Mission chapter have come to the fore as evident in Roman Catholic perspectives on mission. Moreover it would seem that they will continue to shape Catholic understandings of mission for a considerable time into the future. There is, however, an additional model important to mention. It is already implicit especially in the liberation and reconciliation models, but has not yet been worked out sufficiently as to its biblical foundations and theological elaborations: the effects of climate change on the world and what this means within the context of the *missio Dei*. Here work is only beginning, and here much more needs to be done. More than hortatory declamations are needed. Thinking through what this will mean for migration, food and water security, as well as biblical understandings of *shalom* is very much needed. As a worldwide church, the Roman Catholic Church has a special responsibility to listen to the voices around of the world of those who are most vulnerable to these changes. Here alone is enough work for missiologists of every Christian persuasion well into the future.

A MISSIOLOGY OF LISTENING FOR A FOLK CHURCH IN A POSTMODERN CONTEXT

Mogens Mogensen

Abstract in Danish

I kirkeministeriets betænkning fra 2006, Opgaver i sogn, provsti og stift, slås det fast, at Folkekirkens formål er mission. Spørgsmålet er imidlertid, hvilken missiologi der kan vejlede menighederne i deres missionale tjeneste i en kontekst præget af den lange kristne tradition, modernitetens sekularisering, globaliseringens multireligiøsitet og postmodernitetens individualisme og nye spiritualiteter?

På basis af erfaringer fra deltagelse i lytterunder blandt muslimer under Muhammed-kristen, nyåndelige grupper, folkekirkelige grænsegængere, som har færdedes i dette nyåndelige miljø, og blandt sekulariserede danskere i folkekirkens periferi foreslår forfatteren en missiologi, der lægger hovedvægten i mission på at det være lyttende.

Gud er en lyttende Gud, der bevæges af det, han hører, og kirken kaldes til at tage del i Guds dybe lytten til hans skaberværk. Det begynder med en missional spiritualitet, hvor vi sammen lærer at lytte til, hvad Gud siger til os i sit Ord. Det fortsætter med udviklingen af en missional dømmekraft, hvor vi sammen søger at lytte os ind til, hvad Gud kalder os til at gøre. Det munder ud i et missionalt medvænderskab, hvor "Det handler om at lade det andet menneske komme til orde og dermed måske til live" (Bjarne Lenau Henriksen).

Introduction

In 2006 the Ministry of Church Affairs published an official report from a working group about the tasks of the parishes, deaneries and dioceses in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark. In the first paragraph of this report it was stated: 'The mission of the Folk Church as a Christian church is to preach Christ as the saviour of all the world. ... This main task is the reference point for all the concrete forms that church life takes in diocese, deanery and parish. All specific objectives must serve this task.'¹

¹ Kirkeministeriet, *Opgaver i sogn, provsti og stift. Betænkning fra Arbejdsgruppen om ændring af den kirkelige struktur. Sammenfatning* (København: Kirkeministeriet, 2006), 7. My translation.

For the first time since the Evangelical Lutheran Church was written into the Danish Constitution in 1849 as the 'Folk Church' an overall goal was set for the church. Church members had of course engaged in domestic as well as foreign mission through mission societies and other private organisations, but this was the first time that the concept of mission appeared in an official document of the church.

The Danish Folk Church has been a member of the World Council of Churches since its foundation in 1948, but the understanding of mission as part of the church – implicit in the merger of the International Missionary Council with the World Council in 1961, formulated as 'mission in six continents' in 1963 – had no impact on church life in Denmark. 98% of the population were baptized members of the Folk Church and most of the remainder belonged to other churches, so the predominant perception in the Folk Church was that mission was irrelevant in the Danish context.

Since then, however, the context has changed. The process of secularization has led to a situation where Folk Church membership has fallen to 80%, the average Sunday church attendance has fallen to 2%, and the population is becoming increasingly alienated from the Christian tradition. Globalization has led to a religious pluralisation of Danish society, so that Muslims now constitute 4% of the population and Eastern religious and spiritual traditions are gaining influence in an increasingly individualised culture in which people are composing their own religious diet.

The emerging recognition of this situation has prepared the theological soil in Denmark for a serious consideration of a missional ecclesiology. Inspiration has come from among others: The Gospel and Our Cultures network; the Missiology of Western Culture study programme; and books and conferences on missional church. A 'missional church' network for pastors, theologians, and mission leaders was established in 2001, and since 2004 national conferences focusing on the mission challenge of the Folk Church have been held every two years with full support from the bishops. In the last couple of years learning networks of pastors, laypeople, and congregations have begun to experiment with missional practices in the Folk Church.²

Since there is a consensus also in Denmark that mission must be contextual, the question arises: How are we to understand mission in a Danish context? What kind of missiology of Danish culture could guide local congregations of the Folk Church in their mission?

This article is a modest attempt to outline the contours of a missiology for the missional engagement of the Folk Church with Danish culture. First I shall briefly analyse the Danish cultural context and reflect on practical experiences of listening to people in that context. Based on this I shall

² Mogens S Mogensen, 'Missional Kirke I Danmark', *Dansk Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke* 36, 1 (2009).

propose ‘listening’ as a theological lens for the development of a missiology, and consider the practical implications of a missiology of listening.

Underlying all of this is the understanding of mission, which is reflected in the words of the former Bishop of Winchester, John V Taylor, who is quoted as saying, ‘Mission is finding out what God is doing and joining in.’ This proposed missiology brings together the three foundations of mission by listening to the life experiences of ordinary people and the experiences of Christians engaged in a mission of listening, by a missional spirituality of listening to the Bible through a spirituality of listening, and by engaging the insights of theology.

Context of Mission

This article does not allow for a deep and comprehensive analysis of the Danish context so I will focus on one question: What is the relation of the Danish population to Christianity and the Folk Church?

Cultural Christianity as Traditional Religion

The Danish Folk Church has been described as the world’s weakest monopoly church. Very few churches in the world have as high a percentage of national membership as the Danish Folk Church, yet hardly any church has a lower average attendance at Sunday services. ‘Belonging without believing’ is characteristic of most Danes. About 70% of all Danes claim that they are Christians – in their own way. According to the Danish theologian Hans Raun Iversen this leads to a churchless de-christianized Christianity which functions for most Danes as their traditional religion:

A traditional religion is not necessarily fraught with deep theological conviction for its followers, nor one followed with devout piety. It is rather the religion which in the final analysis lies at the deepest level of consciousness and cultural identity, and it is the religion to which one instinctively turns for refuge in a crisis.³

The Folk Church is seen as ‘the distant church’ that does not interfere in its members’ daily lives or place any specific demands on them, but should just ‘be there’ whenever its members need it, in particular for the major transitional events of life.

Christianity has for many centuries influenced Danish culture to the extent that there would hardly be any national Danish culture without it. Iversen has described the most widespread form of Christianity present in Denmark as ‘cultural Christianity’, whose content is ‘a Christian-influenced

³ Hans Raun Iversen, *Church, Society And Mission. Twelve Danish Contributions To International Discussions* (Copenhagen: Faculty of Theology, University of Copenhagen, 2009), 10.

worldview, a Christian concept of man, and some basic ethical and existential values deriving from the teaching of Christianity through the centuries'.⁴ Cultural Christianity, however, in spite of all its values, is not to be mistaken for Christian faith; Cultural Christianity is a Christian-influenced culture and does not involve any confession or discipleship of Christ, and most often exhibits no, or very little, Christian practice.⁵

Hesitant Faith and Hesitant Atheism

During the last 40-50 years secularisation has had a widespread impact on Danish society, and the public role of Christianity and the church has been significantly reduced. Most Danes have a very limited knowledge of Christianity and their level of individual Christian practice is low, but the majority continue to use the Folk Church for transition rites. At the same time most Danes maintain a feeling of identification with, and a belonging to, Christianity.

In an interview a Danish man expresses a typical opinion about Christianity: 'I am not at all afraid that Christianity should disappear from here, for it lies deep in us. But practising it – that is not something we do.'⁶ This may be in line with what a Ghanaian pastor in an international church in Copenhagen has observed: 'Danes are very cautious regarding religion. They do not want to be patronized.' But he adds that 'There is something inside the Danes that longs for God. They are not as godless as many think they are.'⁷

Despite the low level of active interest in Christianity, less than a quarter of the population would call themselves convinced atheists or non-believers, and a high percentage of both groups still believe that there is some kind of god or spiritual power. Furthermore, the majority of these two groups still feel that a religious ceremony is important at birth and death, roughly one in seven pray or meditate, and about a third have strong confidence in the Folk Church.⁸

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⁴ Iversen, *Church, Society And Mission*, 125.

⁵ Iversen, *Church, Society And Mission*, 125-128.

⁶ Peter Gundelach, Hans Raun Iversen and Margit Warburg, *I Hjertet af Danmark. Institutioner og mentaliteter* (København: Hans Reitzels forlag, 2008), 137. My translation.

⁷ Birthe Munck-Fairwood (ed), *Andre stemmer – Migrantkirker i Danmark set indefra* (København: Religionspædagogisk Forlag, 2004), 26. My translation.

⁸ Morten Warmind, 'Ateisme i Danmark' in Morten Thomsen Højsgaard and Hans Raun Iversen (eds), *Gudstro i Danmark* (København: Forlaget Anis. 2005), 284-286.

Religious Encounter

Whereas for centuries Denmark was a religiously very homogeneous society, the last 40 years have witnessed the development of a growing religious pluralisation. The immigration primarily of Muslims but also of Hindus and Buddhists has brought about a situation where many Danes are now meeting people of other faiths on a daily basis. This encounter with other religions seems to have led more Danes to identify themselves as Christians. This may be due not to an attraction to Christianity, but rather to a rejection of Islam. Still, this new situation has led to a self-reflection among Danes concerning their religious identity.

There are many indications of an interaction between immigration and religious change. In the integration process of Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists into Danish society, they encounter a culture influenced by Christianity, they encounter Danish Christians and the Folk Church, and for various reasons some of them decide to convert to Christianity. About half of the converts have joined the Folk Church through baptism. Similarly, some Danes with a Christian background convert to the other religions. The faith and practice of immigrant Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists has certainly been influenced by the encounter with Danish society and with Danish Christians, and vice versa.

Whereas some decades ago the process of secularisation had ensured that religion was almost a non-issue in public life, the very visible presence of adherents of other religions – and the conflicts around them – has today brought religion onto the public agenda. Faith issues have attracted a lot of attention in the media and led to discussions about differences and similarities between the Christian faith and other religions.

New Spiritual Awakening

Thus although Danish society once seemed to be a typical example of the apparently unstoppable process of secularisation, leading to the eventual withering away of religion, in recent decades we have witnessed what might be called a new spiritual awakening. About 140 new religious and spiritual groups have been established in Denmark, most of them under Eastern or esoteric inspiration. It is estimated that about 40,000 people are attached to them in one way or another, but their influence goes way beyond that number. It is further estimated that the number of alternative healers in Denmark is between 7,000 and 9,000, the vast majority of whom draw on similar inspiration as the movements mentioned above.

On the one hand we might say that this spiritual awakening has bypassed the Folk Church – as well as other Christian churches. There is no indication that these new spiritual seekers are beginning to turn up in any significant numbers at church services or other programmes in the church. On the other hand this spiritual awakening is related to the Folk Church in the sense that most of these seekers are its baptized members and continue

to see themselves as Christians. Two-thirds of the alternative healers, for instance, claim that they are also Christians. And about a fourth of all Danes say that they believe in reincarnation.⁹

Characteristic of the Danish context is that most people in Denmark are influenced by all the above-mentioned cultural elements: the long Christian tradition, modernity's secularisation, the religious pluralism brought about by globalisation, and post-modernity's individualism and new spiritualities. Furthermore, with the exception of the still relatively small number of adherents of non-Christian world religions, almost all Danes identify with Christianity in some way, but most people are cautious about explicit faith, and there is a significant ambivalence towards the Folk Church as an institution.

Some of the elements of the Danish context will be similar to the context in other parts of Western Europe. At the same time the configuration varies from country to country, and it is of critical importance in mission to address the specificity of each context.

Missional Praxis

Many spiritual seekers have explained that when first approaching the Folk Church they had the experience of not being heard or understood, and of not even being taken seriously. They felt attracted to the old church building, to the strong rituals of the church, but they could not detect a living spirituality among pastors and church members.

This underlines the critical importance of listening to the context in the mission of the church. Not only when approaching spiritual seekers, but generally when the church wants to be in mission in the Danish context today.

The Importance of Listening to the Context

Dialogue is an important dimension of mission, in particular between people of different faiths. A space is created between people where both parties can express themselves and listen to the others. What is called for here, however, is a something different, it is a unilateral initiative of deep listening to the other, where the focus is on others, their perceptions and understandings, their life experiences, longings and fears, convictions and beliefs. By doing so listeners are creating a space in themselves for others in their alterity or otherness. To use a metaphor from Miroslav Volf's analysis of reconciliation as embrace, it means that the listeners are 'opening their arms', when they adopt a truly deep listening posture.

⁹ René Dybdal Peersen, *I lysets tjeneste. Nye religiøse og spirituelle grupper i Danmark* (Århus: Forlaget Univers, 2005). Lars Ahlin, *Krop, sind – eller ånd? Alternative behandlere og spiritualitet* (Århus: Forlaget Univers, 2007).

Opening your arms – listening deeply to the other – you are also opening yourself to be changed by what you hear. You make yourself vulnerable and you have to live with the indeterminate nature of the outcome. The others may also open their arms – and begin to listen deeply to you – but they may also decide not to do so.¹⁰

Most relationships are asymmetrical in terms of status and power. Mission in Christ's way is not a mission based on a position of power, but a mission in vulnerability. When the Folk Church – being the church of the great majority and a state church – engages in mission there is a need to find a way of doing so that is consonant with the way of Christ. The approach of deep listening may be such a way.

Over the last five years I have had the privilege to participate in a series of listening initiatives, where representatives of the Folk Church have approached various groups of people offering to listen to them. Reflecting on these experiences may help us to develop a relevant missiology for the Danish context.

Listening to Muslims

In the first months of 2006 Denmark experienced its most serious international political crisis since the German occupation in 1940-45. A few months earlier the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* had published a series of cartoons of the prophet Muhammad that many Muslims in Denmark as well as in other parts of the world considered extremely offensive. Muslims demonstrated in many countries, and in Africa and Asia lives were lost in clashes between Muslims and Christians.

In this tense situation DanChurch Interfaith Relations¹¹ on behalf of the Folk Church initiated a listening tour to 24 mosques and Muslim organisations in Denmark aimed at easing the tensions. We came to listen to Danish Muslims, how they perceived the cartoon crisis, what they had experienced as immigrants and Muslims in Denmark, what wishes and hopes they had for the future, and what ideas they had about a possible cooperation between Christians and Muslims in order to solve some of the new problems facing the multi-religious Danish society.

Our listening approach was very much appreciated. Often Muslims had felt overlooked by the media, but now at least somebody from the official Folk Church had come to listen to them, to their perspectives and pains, their insights and interests, without condemning them or being defensive. In the midst of this tense atmosphere in Denmark the listening tour led to the development of relationships between Christian and Muslim leaders

¹⁰ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace. A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 125f, 140-147.

¹¹ DanChurch Interfaith Relations is an interfaith office set up by dioceses in the Folk Church. See www.religionsmoede.dk.

based on mutual confidence and a common concern for Danish society. Later in 2006 a national dialogue conference for Christian and Muslims leaders was conducted for the first time, and since then annual conferences have been held. A Christian-Muslim Dialogue Forum was established where even delicate issues could be addressed with a view to how we as Muslims and Christians together could contribute to the common good of society.¹²

Listening to Spiritual Seekers

As outlined above, the 'spiritual awakening' seems to have bypassed the Folk Church. Instead of exploring the rich Christian tradition of spirituality the spiritual seekers mentioned above are looking to Buddhist, Hindu, Theosophical, and other traditions for their inspiration. In 2007 DanChurch Interfaith Relations therefore decided to go and listen to representatives from twelve organisations and centres inspired by Eastern spirituality and religiosity.

As a listening team we experienced a warm welcome from all the spiritual seekers, who were eager to talk to us about their spiritual life. Almost all of them had had personal experiences that had started them on their spiritual journey. For various reasons they did not find help in the Folk Church to interpret these experiences, so they began to search for answers in Eastern religious traditions.

Surprisingly, in listening to their experiences and longings we found that, all differences apart, we had a lot in common. Most of them were still members of the Folk Church; they appreciated the old church buildings and the rituals of the church, but deplored what they perceived to be a lack of living spirituality. They nevertheless hoped for a spiritual development of the Folk Church and some of them were eager to contribute to this. For most of them Christ played a significant role in their spirituality, although their Christology might appear to be 'unorthodox'.

The act of listening to their experiences and simultaneously interpreting it – an experiencing their eagerness to listen to us – brought us into a meaningful relationship, and gave us a feeling of accompanying each other on our spiritual journeys – and as a Christian I would add, in the presence

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¹² Leif Vestergaard, Safet Bektovic & Mogens S Mogensen, *Rapport Fra En Lytterunde Blandt Muslimske Organisationer Og Moskeer* (Århus: Folkekirke og Religionsmøde, 2006). For an analysis of the cartoon crisis and listening initiative in English, see Mogens S Mogensen, *From Cartoon Crisis To Headscarf Row. Two Conflicts Changing Multireligious Denmark* (Christiansfeld: Intercultural.dk, 2008) 11-33 and 51-67.

of God. The door seemed to be open to exploring together the significance of Jesus for our spiritual life.¹³

Listening to Christian Bridge-Builders

In 2008 DanChurch Interfaith Relations decided to follow up on the listening tour among spiritual seekers by going to listen to ten people with unique experiences in this area. All of them were members of the Folk Church, half of them were or had been pastors in the Folk Church and the other half were laypeople, all of whom for many years had been in contact with the alternative spiritual organisations and spiritual seekers. They were all well-versed in the Christian tradition, had established strong friendships with people in the new religious movements, and had got to know their traditions very well.

They viewed themselves as bridge-builders between the Folk Church and these new spiritual movements, and as such they were both open to learning from them and ready to share the gospel with them. They were pioneers walking in the borderland between traditional Christianity and Eastern-inspired spiritualities, a region that is both hazardous and fertile, but one where they as Christians felt called to move – to learn from other spiritual pilgrims and to share the gospel with them. Their experience was that listening to spiritual seekers might lead to the transformation of both parties.

However, most of these twelve people we interviewed felt very strongly that their pioneer work had not been appreciated by the leaders of the Folk Church. They shared with us their pain of not being listened to or taken seriously, but of being met with suspicion. By listening to these experienced bridge-builders who had moved in the borderland between the church and Eastern-inspired spiritual groups we learned a lot from their experiences – and our simple act of listening seemed to bring some healing to these ‘wounded’ Christians, and opened up new avenues for cooperation.¹⁴

Listening to People on the Periphery of the Church

In 2009 a missional learning network for pastors and laypeople in Denmark was set up. Inspired by the work of Church Innovations in St Pauls, Minnesota,¹⁵ we decided among other things to conduct focus-group

¹³ Lars Møllerup Degn, et al, *Tro i tiden. Lytterunde blandt mennesker inspireret af østlig religiøsitet og spiritualitet* (Århus: Folkekirke og Religionsmøde. Aarhus: Stiftssamarbejdet ‘Folkekirke og Religionsmøde’, 2008).

¹⁴ Berit Schelde Christensen, et al, *Tro i lære. Lytterunde. Folkekirkens møde med tidens åndelige strømninger* (Aarhus: Stiftssamarbejdet ‘Folkekirke og Religionsmøde’, 2008)

¹⁵ www.churchinnovations.com.

interviews with people in our local communities who were on the periphery of the Folk Church or even completely alienated from it. There were relational questions about family and friendship, existential questions about suffering and meaning, and religious and spiritual questions about faith, prayer, and the church.

When this was proposed, some critics said that the Danes were too shy about religion to be willing to spend an evening talking with people from the local church about such personal issues. But those who conducted the interviews found that many were willing to participate in, and indeed appreciated, the listening approach. They enjoyed sharing elements from their life stories and discussing their existential reflections.

Those representing the Folk Church learned much about how such people view Christianity and the church. By being listening to those interviewed had a unique opportunity to verbalise their understanding of life and in many cases also their weak and implicit faith. This deep listening often led to an open mutual sharing of experiences and insights, and relationships were established that might become bridges between Christianity and the lives of these people alienated from the church.

Missiological Reflection

At the centre of any understanding of Christian mission is the gospel of Jesus Christ. How then do we communicate the good news in a Danish context characterised by traditional Christianity, secular modernity, globalised multi-religiosity, and post-modern spiritualities? A context where there are often no sharp borders between those who are Christians and those who are not? Traditionally we would say that the gospel is communicated by what we say and what we do, by preaching and *diaconia*, but the experiences described in the previous section suggest that it would be helpful if a missiology of Danish culture started somewhere else, in a listening presence in a local context.

There are of course many different kinds of listening, but the listening in question is a 'deep listening' which may be characterized as a 'listening that is guided not by the aim of conquering or controlling but by the aim of being with another in a sensitive way and of responding with wisdom and compassion.'¹⁶

A Listening God

The mission of the church is participation in the mission of God. Do we participate in God's mission by listening to our culture? Is God not only a

¹⁶ Jay McDaniel, 'In The Beginning Is The Listening' in Darby (ed), *Theology That Matters* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 29.

speaking God and an acting God, but also a listening God? And is listening central to who God is and to what God does and says?

One of the most important manifestations of the Christian faith is prayer. Jesus taught his disciples to pray to God as their heavenly father. Prayer was not seen as an act of obedience to a divine law, but was an invitation to communion with God. The premise for Jesus' teaching on prayer is that God our Father listens to our prayers, is moved by our prayers, and responds to our prayers by what he says and does to us, and for us, and to and for others in the world. Furthermore, listening seems to be part of the communion of the trinity, for repeatedly the gospels speak of the 'Son' praying to the 'Father'.

In his article 'In the Beginning is the Listening', the American theologian Jay McDaniel writes,

Even God must begin with listening. After all, God cannot respond to the cries of the world or share in its joys unless God first hears those cries and feels those joys. And if there was once a time when God existed all alone – when there was no universe as we know it but only the potential in God's mind for there being a universe – then God had to listen to the potentialities. In the beginning, even for God, there had to be a listening.¹⁷

According to the New Testament, God not only loves, God is love. A significant expression of God's love is his listening to us. As McDaniel says, 'This means that the very essence of God includes deep receptivity, deep feeling, deep listening. Without the Listening there would be no God. God is Deep Listening.'¹⁸ Underlying and informing all that God says and does to the world is his deep listening to his creation. He expresses his love for mankind by his decision to listen to us in a way that moves him to action. When human beings experience the deep listening of God in their communion with him, they come alive and God listens to them 'into free speech'. Deep listening is thus an integral dimension in God's mission in our world.

As human beings we have been created 'in the image of God', i.e., in the image of a listening God, and we have been created with the potential for deep listening. When God calls his church to participate in his mission in the world, he calls us to participate in his own deep listening. This deep listening will inform not only our actual encounter or meeting with people, but also the way we try to discern God's guidance for us in mission and the basic spirituality of mission.

Missional Spirituality of Listening

Since the mission of the church is participation in the mission of God, mission starts by the church listening to the God of mission. Through

¹⁷ McDaniel, 'In the Beginning Is the Listening', 29

¹⁸ McDaniel, 'In the Beginning is the Listening', 35.

listening to the Word of God we may experience communion with God and begin to see and understand our own individual life stories as part of the great story of God from creation to redemption, from the Fall of Man to the Kingdom of God. When a local group of Christians together listen to the Word of God and together reflect on what they hear, and then respond in prayer and worship, they are being formed as a community for participation in God's mission.

Such a missional spirituality of listening may be practised in many different ways. One that has worked very well in a Danish Folk Church context is the method developed by Church Innovations in St Pauls, Minnesota, namely 'Dwelling in the Word'. This is an exercise in 'deep listening' where a text is selected relevant to the missional situation of the church, e.g. Luke 10:1-12 (Jesus sending out the 72), and read aloud in the group. 'This deep listening happens in dwelling because the practice involves hearing the passage, reflecting silently upon it, and then finding a partner we don't know well and listening that person into speaking freely (sic) about what thoughts or feelings came during the reading.' Afterwards in the plenary each participant reports as accurately as possible what he or she has heard from the partner. 'Then [you] wrestle together as a group with what God might be up to in the passage for your group on that day.'¹⁹

The founder of Church Innovations, Patrick Keifert, shares how the practice of Dwelling in the Word over a long period might impact a group of people by developing their Christian imagination of the Kingdom of God, which is 'at hand', i.e., present in our daily life, but not 'in hand', i.e., under our control.

...something close to a miracle happens to the imaginations and hearts and eventually the actions of the leaders of the local church and of the many that follow them. They begin to imagine their lives being lived within the life of the living, triune God. Within this imagination, they experience both the at-hand-ness of the Reign of God and also its clear not-in-hand-ness ... [they] begin to speak freely of their sense of God's engagement in their lives and a sense of their partnership within the mission of God. Within this strengthened Christian imagination, they begin to see and experience the world, especially their immediate community, service area, and those with whom they live their daily lives, in new terms, no longer only as humans would see them but as God does.²⁰

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This form of a missional, listening spirituality is easy for all to practice, including laypeople. It is open for all to join in, including those who do not know whether they would consider themselves Christians or not.

¹⁹ Ellison, Pat Taylor and Patrick Keifert, *Dwelling In The Word* (Church Innovations, n.d.), 10-11.

²⁰ Patrick Keifert, *We Are Here Now. A New Missional Era* (Eagle, Idaho: Allelon Publishing, 2006), 70-71.

Missional Discernment of Listening

If ‘mission is finding out what God is doing and joining in’, how do we as a church discern what God is doing in our context, so that we might join in as partners in his mission?

First of all, a missional discernment involves listening to, and reflecting together on, the Word of God and the tradition of the people of God. Practising a missional spirituality of listening to God, for example through the practice of ‘Dwelling in the Word’, helps to develop a ‘Christian imagination’ where we begin to sense God’s engagement in the global and in our local world.

A missional discernment also involves listening to the culture and society in which we are called to be in mission. In the next section we will focus on a missional accompaniment of listening to other people; when we practise this we will get a glimpse of what God is doing in the lives of people in our neighbourhood.

Finally, a missional discernment involves listening to the experience of the faithful. In the church we must endeavour to ‘listen each other into free speech’, in informal conversations and formal interview processes where we together inquire appreciatively into the experiences of the congregation to find out what God has been doing in and through the members of the congregation. Our God-given hopes and dreams are shared in order to sense what God may be calling the congregation to do.²¹

Missional Accompaniment of Listening

The story in Luke 24 of the two disciples walking to Emmaus is the prime example of a missional accompaniment of listening. Apparently distressed by the death of Jesus whom they had hoped would be the promised Messiah they leave Jerusalem to go to Emmaus. First, Jesus meets the two disciples and accompanies them on their way. Second, he listens to them, to what they are concerned about, and asks them questions. The outcome of this missional accompaniment of listening is a conversation and meal fellowship in which the disciples encounter the risen Christ.

This missional accompaniment of listening may be creatively practised in numerous ways, formal and informal. By developing a dimension of deep listening in the way the church is present in the local community, in its diaconal activities, and in its communication. Instead of beginning by

²¹ Pat Taylor Ellison, ‘Word-Dwelling, Deep Listening, And Faith-Based Moral Conversation In Congregations: A Nested Vision For Learning New Habits’ in Patrick Keifert, *Testing The Spirits. How Theology Informs The Study Of Congregations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009). Mark Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes And Conversations. Appreciative Inquiry And Congregational Change* (Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 2004).

asking people to come to us in the church to listen, we go to them, accompany them on their way, and listen to them.

What is the significance of the listening dimension in the mission of the church? In discussing how to lead people to Christ the Danish theologian and philosopher Søren Kierkegaard explains why listening is so critically important.

In order truly to help someone else, I must understand more than he – but certainly first and foremost understand what he understands. If I do not do that, then my greater understanding does not help him at all But all true helping begins with a humbling. The helper must first humble himself under the person he wants to help and thereby understand that to help is not to dominate but to serve, that to help is not to be the most dominating but the most patient, that to help is a willingness for the time being to put up with being in the wrong and not understanding what the other understands.²²

We must practise deep listening to really understand where people are, and deep listening is an expression of the patience and humility that is the mark of mission in the way of Christ.

Where then are our fellow-Danes, who have become more or less alienated from the church, and with whom we are called to share the gospel? And how do they understand the situation? Through deep listening we will probably come across elements of the Christian tradition or maybe even a hidden weak faith or a longing for meaning and hope. The former leader of the Danish diaconal organisation 'Kirkens Korshær' (Church Army), Bjarne Lenau Henriksen, has explained in a few words what deep listening does to people. 'It's about letting the other person speak and perhaps come alive. It's about being present, being present, always being present.'

'Faith comes from hearing' (Rom 10:17), but the faith of our heart needs to be voiced to come or stay alive (Rom 10:9-10), and deep listening is conducive to the voicing of a personal faith. In one of our Danish hymns, NFS Grundtvig emphasises this dynamic relationship between heart and mouth:

My mouth and my heart did
a covenant make
in joy and in anguish
to never forsake
each other for ever
and to conceal never
what in them has been given life.²³

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Some might object to the understanding of mission as listening and ask if the preaching or proclamation of the gospel is not mistakenly omitted.

²² Søren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View for My Work as An Author* (Trans. Howard Vincent Hong and Edna Hatlestad Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 45.

²³ Translated by Edward Broadbridge.

For many centuries the gospel has been preached by the Folk Church from a position of power and authority. In a post-modern context where there is a 'cry for authenticity',²⁴ the Folk Church is often still perceived to operate on the basis of a state institution. In an article analysing the shift in mission from modernity to post-modernity, Jørgen Skov Sørensen, Director of the Interchurch Council of the Folk Church, concludes that:

It is a journey where we actually leave an authoritarian mission attitude behind, but at the same time look forward towards being authentic to our faith, tradition, and current context through the interpretive ethos of post-modernity and in a witnessing encounter with a culturally and religiously polycentric world.²⁵

Deep listening to the other may be an expression of an authentic mission approach. By this deep listening to the other's perspectives and experiences we may earn the right ourselves to be listened to so that we may share our spiritual journey with God.

Conclusion

For most congregations in the Danish Folk Church, mission is still a very sensitive issue. On the one hand the Danish population, with a few distinct exceptions, is considered to be Christian, while mission – as it is known to have been practised among adherents of other religions in Africa and Asia – is therefore perceived to be a provocation. On the other hand, there is a growing realisation that *something* must be done in response to the increasing alienation of Danes from the Folk Church and possibly also from the Christian faith. In this situation a missiology of listening might be a way out of the dilemma. It begins with the practice of a missional spirituality of listening, and through a process of a missional discernment it leads to a missional accompaniment of listening.

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²⁴ Kenneth Ross, 'From Edinburgh 1910 To Edinburgh 2010' in Mogens S Mogensen (ed), *Edinburgh 1910 – 100 år Eter. Fra Autoritet Til Autencitet i Mission? Ny Mission Nr. 17* (Frederiksberg: Dansk Missionsråd, 2009).

²⁵ Jørgen Skov Sørensen, 'From The Modernity of 1910 to the Post-Modernity of 2010 – The Case Of Authority vs. Authenticity In Mission' in Mogens S Mogensen (ed), *Edinburgh 1910 – 100 år efter. Fra Autoritet til Autencitet i Mission? Ny Mission Nr. 17*, 69.

FOUNDATIONS FOR MISSION IN A MOVEMENT OF WORLD EVANGELIZATION FROM LAUSANNE TO CAPE TOWN

Harold Segura and Valdir Steuernagel

Abstract in Portuguese

O Movimento de Lausanne, com o seu Pacto (Lausanne 74) e seu Compromisso da Cidade do Cabo (Lausanne III, 2010), é olhado, neste artigo, como um espelho bastante fidedigno do que se poderia considerar a caminhada missiológica da família evangélica. Suas afirmações confessionais fundamentais, suas tensões no que se refere à compreensão da tarefa missionária da igreja e o seu esforço por acomodar essas mesmas tensões no seu próprio interior são marcas desta caminhada, ainda que a família evangélica tenha se expandido enormemente nas últimas décadas e a sua maioria tenha se mudado "para o sul do mundo". Lausanne quer ser movimento e a expansão evangelical, bem como a sua própria missiologia, tem muito a marca de movimento. Movimento que é alimentado por forte convicção, muito carisma, claro desafio, grande operacionalidade e uma compreensão de unidade que é também operacional – estas são fortes marcas do movimento evangélico e, conseqüentemente, do movimento de Lausanne. Um movimento que encontrou na Cidade do Cabo, por ocasião de Lausanne III, um novo ponto de encontro e no Compromisso da Cidade do Cabo uma rejuvenescida confissão de fé e um atualizado mapa dos desafios e oportunidades que marcam este tempo e esta geração no compromisso de que “toda a igreja leve todo o evangelho a todos os povos”. Bem assim como Lausanne tem dito desde o seu início e o quer dizer uma vez mais.

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Abstract in Spanish

El Movimiento de Lausana, mejor conocido por el encuentro de 1974 y por la declaración que surgió de allí (Pacto de Lausana), es una de las expresiones más reveladoras del estado actual del movimiento evangélico global. En el presente artículo se presenta un panorama histórico desde 1974 (Lausana, Suiza) hasta el año 2010 (Ciudad del Cabo, Sudáfrica), mostrando su evolución interna, sus principales intereses y tensiones. Para los autores del texto, Lausana sirve como espejo a través del cual reconocer a la familia evangélica y develar, en especial, su pasión misionera, su apego

a las Escrituras, su comprensión de la unidad de la Iglesia entre otros temas cruciales. Sin querer afirmar que Lausana es la única expresión de la misionología evangélica en el mundo, sí se propone que, sus declaraciones históricas, así como sus aportes a la evangelización del mundo, constituyen un punto de referencia plenamente válido para comprender (leer) el enfoque misionero evangélico. La primera parte del artículo se concentra en la descripción y en el análisis histórico del Movimiento de Lausana; en la segunda parte, se complementa lo presentado antes con la exposición de algunos los pilares de la misionología del documento titulado *Compromisos de Ciudad del Cabo* (2010): la referencia a las Escrituras, la centralidad de Jesucristo, la Trinidad, su compromiso con la misión integral y sus desafíos misioneros ante un mundo diverso y plural.

Cape Town Was a Surprise and a Gift

The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Cape Town, South Africa from 16-25 October 2010 (CT2010), was an impressive, moving and well-attended enterprise. Gathering over 4,200 people from 198 of the world's nations (even though the Chinese government did not allow its delegation to come) it mirrored the diverse and rich reality of the global evangelical family.¹ Hosting such a significant group of Christian leaders, with a majority of the so-called 'Southern countries',² may be regarded as one of the most significant gatherings of evangelical Christians in our history so far. By also embracing 700 young people, establishing a 35% quota for women³ and 10% for lay participation, the event made evident that the evangelical churches are very much alive, active and responsive to the task of world evangelization, which is the main motto of the Lausanne Movement.

The movement is diverse and evangelical. It has an emphasis on the involvement of non-clerical people and young people in the mission enterprise. It uses new means of communication to announce the gospel to those who have not heard that message. It aims to plant and grow churches. It is involved in a whole range of diverse and creative outreach ministries

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¹ See the *Forward* to The Cape Town Commitment, by Doug Birdsall and Lindsay Brown (published by the Lausanne Movement, 2011), 3.

² In this article the 'North-South' language has a socio-economic dimension. 'North' is the place of the rich and developed nations whose historic churches are mostly declining. 'South' is the place of the poor and less developed countries and where most of the church growth takes place today. It is shorthand for a complex, nuanced reality.

³ The evangelizing world presents a confusing picture in terms of gender balance. Some of the most anti-women churches and ministries are evangelical while others are quite inclusive. Besides, a significant portion of the work force in the mission enterprise is made up of women.

from presentations of the 'Four Spiritual Laws' to social projects with street children in non-Christian environment.

CT2010 was not a rosy enterprise. The leadership of the congress had carefully considered a process by which they identified and gathered a diverse range of key evangelical leaders from around the world, with special attention to those representing the dynamic churches in the Southern hemisphere. Even so, the people power, the available mission leaders, the funding the technological ability and means of communication were still largely in the hands of the Northern hemisphere. Therefore, people who worked at the Congress were mostly seconded by their Northern based organizations, and the money raised, with some significant exceptions, came heavily from the richer USA evangelical constituency. In this sense CT 2010 expressed the North-South dilemma with the added fact that the movement works fundamentally with voluntary people and organizations. But in spite of these challenges the event went ahead, tried hard to be representative, and the necessary funds were raised even if it had to be done in midst of the 2008/2009 economic crises.

Considering all those factors, Lausanne was successful in bringing together the most significant leadership of the evangelical world of today fulfilling its purpose: 'To convene Christian leaders worldwide to confront the critical issues of our time and help develop a deeper level of unity, partnership and collaboration in the ongoing task of bringing the whole gospel to the whole world.'⁴ There was even an ecumenical touch to the event, which has not always been common in evangelical circles. CT 2010 had representatives from the Roman Catholic Church, the World Council of Churches and from the Orthodox family. As a gesture of mutual acceptance the general secretary of the WCC, Olav Fykse Tveit, greeted the congress participants. These are new ecumenical days, even though only timid steps in this direction were seen. But those very steps would have been impossible in the early days of the Lausanne Movement.

As we look here at evangelical foundations of mission as seen within the Lausanne movement we start referring to *an event* and *a movement*. By doing so, we point to one of the most dynamic expressions of evangelicalism which is 'movement'. It is a loose, pragmatic movement of which Lausanne is but one expression. Lausanne is a voluntary movement. It offers people place and space to meet, to get to know each other, compare experiential notes, build partnerships, and focus on the mission challenge still ahead. The experience comes first, and is followed by reflection to critically evaluate the experience. Events are key opportunities for such an encounter between experience and reflection, for the identification of challenge and strategic goal setting. Therefore, events become key places where a theology of mission is articulated, generating a theology on the move and in close contact with experience, challenge and

⁴ See http://icm25.org/Documents/GlobaLink_brochure_P1.pdf

opportunity. In this regard it could be said that within the Lausanne movement, a theology of mission is articulated along with a call for eyes to see the challenge ahead and for feet to touch the contextual ground.

In one understanding of mission, context is very important since mission needs to take place according to the incarnational model of Jesus. Mission, as a service to the Kingdom of God, invests in the transformation of people, communities and societies. Another voice will call for mission to keep a clear focus around the proclamation of the Gospel. A Gospel that needs to be proclaimed to all with a special emphasis on reaching to those people and people groups who have not heard the Gospel and those communities which have not been gifted with a church in their midst. These two trends have characterized much of the Lausanne journey and have lived together more often in tension than in mutuality, but always with a clear understanding that the good news of God's Kingdom need to be heard, obeyed and globally shared in such a way that the church is fulfilling the Great Commission.

The Journey Towards Lausanne '74 Points to the Journey After Lausanne '74

The nature and shape of evangelical movements like Lausanne determine their understanding of mission and theology of mission. They are single-minded, action-oriented, and have little patience with disagreements or even diverging perceptions and opinions. Especially at their beginning, people are called to share a common perception of a need and to follow the cry of a charismatic leader to address that need. The Lausanne movement is the product of the International Congress on World Evangelization that took place in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1974. Delegates do not represent their church structures but they do carry along the weight of their leadership. Para-church organizations are strong in the evangelical world and they gather around movements like Lausanne, bringing to them significant charisma, energy, creativity, operational freedom and even financial resources. This is very much an evangelical phenomenon that has shaped the evangelical world, being the Lausanne Movement's most visible expression, in the good times of the heights of the Lausanne '74 event and in the low years of the late nineties and early 2000, when the very existence of the movement was in jeopardy. Movements like Lausanne are strong when charisma, relational gifts, visionary enterprise and fundraising capacities come together. This was the case at the first decade of the movement when leaders like Billy Graham, Leighton Ford and John Stott represented much of those skills coming together. Once that chemistry started vanishing the movement experienced difficult years. The vision became fuzzy, the charisma was less present and the money disappeared.

Before Lausanne '74 there was Berlin '66. In 1966 the World Congress on Evangelism took place and established, for the first time, a real

worldwide platform for the contemporary evangelical movement.⁵ It was an event marked by a tone of protest and a cry for space. When the International Missionary Council, which was an outcome of Edinburgh 1910, was integrated into the World Council of Churches in 1961, 'large numbers of *missionary agencies* which had been members of the IMC' but were not keen to belong to the Ecumenical movement were left, in the words of David Bosch, 'virtually in the cold'.⁶ This 'cold' had two dimensions. One was theological, since evangelicals perceived the ecumenical movement, as expressed in the WCC, moving into a liberal avenue in which mission, as seen until then, was no longer an unquestionable priority. The other one was hierarchical and structural, as evangelical churches and mission agencies discerned the integration of 'mission' into the WCC as a movement into a more structural and bureaucratic approach to mission. Both movements were unacceptable to the evangelical convictions and practices, and Berlin '66 wanted to affirm the clear task of evangelism and the need to freely embark into it. Furthermore, they saw it as the reestablishment of a lost continuity with Edinburgh 1910, as clearly stated by Billy Graham at the Congress:

One of the purposes of this World Congress on Evangelism is to make an urgent appeal to the world church to return to the dynamic zeal for world evangelization that characterized Edinburgh 56 years ago. Remembering their Lord's word, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel', the Student Volunteer Movement shouted to the world: 'The evangelization of the world in this generation!' – or as John Mott once worded it: 'Carrying the Gospel to the non-Christian world'.⁷

The evangelistic task was understood as the verbal presentation of the Gospel with the expectation that people's acceptance of it would change their lives and, as a consequence, their context. However, a reaction to this articulation came from the floor through the voice of a black American minister: 'Law did for me and my people in America what empty and high-powered evangelical preaching never did for 100 years.'⁸ The classic position on evangelism was facing some uneasiness within communities living in conflict situations. In Berlin '66 this emerged through the voices

⁵ The WCE took place at the Berlin Kongresshalle from Oct 25 to November 4, 1966 and gathered 1,200 people from over 100 nations and from 76 church bodies.

⁶ David J Bosch, 'In Search of a New Evangelical Understanding' in Bruce Nichols (ed), *In Word and Deed; Evangelism and Social Responsibility* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1985), 65.

⁷ Billy Graham, 'Why the Berlin Congress?' in Carl Henry & Stanley Mooneyham (eds) *One Race, One Gospel, One Task: World Congress on Evangelism, Berlin 1966*, vol 1, Official Reference Volume (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1967), 23.

⁸ See the discussion around the race issue in Berlin '66 in Valdir Steuernagel, *The Theology of Mission in its relation to Social Responsibility within the Lausanne Movement* (A dissertation submitted to the LSTC, Chicago 1988), 106-110.

of black Americans from the USA and from some representatives of South African communities who added their political and social experience to the race issue. It was at the regional events, which were an outcome of the Berlin Congress, where the social aspect of mission emerged as an important point of discussion, exploding first at the Latin American Congress on Evangelization.⁹ This Congress introduced new elements to the evangelical missiological conversation. It recognised that context needs to be taken seriously when talking about evangelization; that the incarnation of Christ was the model for the church's involvement in its missionary task; and that the gospel of Jesus Christ has social and political implications and so Christians need to be engaged in the call and nurturing of those implications.¹⁰

There was no intention at all to give up any of the key dimensions of an evangelical identity. Rather there was an insistence that evangelical identity should be lived in the entirety of the contexts in which evangelicals found themselves. This was, in fact, a call for a radicalization of the evangelical tradition that stressed a type of evangelization that aimed to take the whole Gospel to the whole person, affecting the whole community.

The challenge and the tension around such issues have infused the whole history of the Lausanne Movement and they were alive in Cape Town 2010. They could be described as follows:

- The presuppositional vis-à-vis the contextual understanding of the gospel;
- The verbal vis-à-vis the incarnational understanding of witness to Jesus Christ;
- The individual vis-à-vis the collective and systemic expression of the transformative nature of the Gospel; and
- The eternal vis-à-vis the immanent understanding of mission engagement and its implications towards salvation.

It is both a difficulty and a richness of the Lausanne Movement that it has not solved those issues by taking sides. Instead, it has embraced both of them and decided to keep them within the movement, insisting that there is only one table to sit at. This was so in Lausanne 1974 and so it was in Cape Town 2010.

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The Agenda Around Lausanne '74 and the Covenant it Produced

As time moved deep into the second half of the last century, evangelicals experienced growth and recognition. The evangelical initiative had now moved strongly into the tissue of the North American society and had

⁹ This Congress took place in Bogota, in 1969 and was part of other regional events that followed Berlin '66. The others were: Nigeria '68, Singapore '68, Minneapolis '69, Amsterdam '71.

¹⁰ 'The Evangelical Declaration of Bogotá' in *EvMQ* 6, no. 3 (1970) 174.

become publicly active, rich and influential. Several ministries, which had started in the fifties, became international and were rapidly reaching out to many different countries and people groups. In the European setting evangelicals started to meeting in a more intentional way, affirming a sound evangelical theology and a respectable mission practice. The Southern evangelical churches were growing and producing leaders who wanted to take part in the international affairs of mission. It was time for Lausanne 1974, which gathered 'some 2,700 participants and guests from over 159 nations'¹¹ its goal being 'to mobilize the whole church to proclaim the whole gospel to the whole world.'¹²

While Berlin '66 was a Congress on Evangelism, Lausanne wanted to focus on evangelization. The difference was affirmed by the Chairman of Lausanne: '...the present thought in the minds of many leaders around the world is that we need not only to think of evangelism, that is, the proclamation of the Gospel, but the whole task given to us by the risen Christ. This, I think more aptly, is called evangelization.'¹³ To focus on evangelization, in this understanding, also meant to move beyond the methodological dimension around evangelism and enter the theological conversation around the mission of the church. The changes taking place within the evangelical world had to be considered at the theological and sociological level. There was a call for the importance of a deeper biblical and incarnational understanding of mission. And for a recognition of the economic and political implications and mission. Lausanne '74 embraced and gave voice to those changes, which can be heard through key voices.

Billy Graham affirmed the priority of evangelism while calling for the clarification of the relationship between evangelization and social responsibility and for evangelicals of all persuasions to come together around the task of world evangelization. John Stott redirected the conversation around evangelism to its content and not to its result, a conversation around the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ according to the witness of Scripture. He also introduced a definition of mission as being 'everything the church is sent into the world to do',¹⁴ according to the double call of the church to be 'salt of the earth' and 'light of the world'. Donald McGavran and Ralph Winter introduced the concept of 'homogenous unity' and of 'unreached people' and became the strategic gurus of the evangelical mission world. Though the need to reach out

¹¹ 'History and Heritage of the Lausanne Movement', Cape Town 2010. The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, www.lausanne.org.

¹² 'The Purpose of Lausanne' in *The Lausanne Story* (n.p.: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization 1987), 16.

¹³ An interview by A Jack Dain, quoted in the *Lausanne Story*, 13.

¹⁴ John Stott, 'The Biblical basis of Evangelism,' in JD Douglas (ed), *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland* (Official Reference Volume, Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), 63.

evangelistically was clear in the evangelical tradition, they called for it to be done in more effective ways and also in ways sensitive to people's environment and culture.¹⁵ Rene Padilla and Samuel Escobar stressed the holistic nature of the gospel by which soteriology cannot be separated from ethics, reconciliation with God cannot be separated from reconciliation with the other human being, and where the search for salvation must affect every aspect of life because our hope is based in the renewal of all things in light of God's Kingdom.

The Lausanne Congress was certainly a milestone in the global evangelical circles. In due proportion, and considering its typical fragmentation, it could be said that Lausanne meant for evangelicals what Vatican II meant for the Roman Catholics: it focused on the need to open windows to the world and face the winds of modernity, and attempted to understand and reinterpret the task of the church in the context of a world community that had become global.¹⁶

The most important dimension of the Lausanne Congress, however, was not the event in itself but the Covenant it produced. This Covenant, through 15 articles, provided space and language for the classic affirmation of the evangelical understanding of mission while calling all to respond to the signs of the times, to a broader perception of the church's engagement in mission, to the emergence of a new leadership called to fulfil the Great Commission in light of the mission given by God to the whole church.

While the Continuation Committee felt the responsibility to shepherd the Congress into a Movement, a larger, fluid movement, the so-called 'spirit of Lausanne,' spread under the umbrella of the Covenant. The Lausanne Covenant was the great strength of the Lausanne Movement and provided the agenda of the global evangelical mission family inspiring both the 'spirit of Lausanne' as well as the missiological agenda of the movement.

From Lausanne 1974 to Cape Town 2010: A Journey of Valleys and Mountains

Many years went by between Lausanne 1974 and Cape Town 2010, but the Lausanne Covenant stands strong in the history of the movement. This was seen in different gatherings that took place throughout the world afterwards. We, as two Latin American writers, for instance, witnessed to this as we saw the II and III Latin American Congresses of Evangelism being based upon the Lausanne Covenant and enjoying the platform Lausanne created for world evangelicals. Another experience happened in Asia where, through the Asia Lausanne Committee on Evangelism and the

¹⁵ See Ralph Winter, 'The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism', in *Let the Earth*, 241.

¹⁶ See Valdir Steuernagel, 'The Theology of Mission in Its Relationship to Social Responsibility within the Lausanne Movement', 132, 133.

Chinese Co-ordination Centre for World Evangelization, the Spirit of Lausanne was kept regionally much alive, even if in Asia the emphasis was stronger on the unreached people groups while Latin America stressed the holistic mission of the church. The Spirit of Lausanne as well as the Lausanne Covenant also provided European Evangelicals with a platform for encounter and a missiological agenda which breathed new life and hope into an evangelical family.

Besides some of those regional developments, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE), which emerged out of the Congress, set the agenda for the following years around key issues emerging of the Covenant, addressing them through well managed consultations: the homogenous unit principle (1977), Gospel and culture (1978), simple life-style (1980), social responsibility (1982), the Holy Spirit (1985), and conversion (1988). These gatherings kept the Lausanne flame much alive and helped to establish a missiological agenda for the evangelical world, while also providing a bridge of conversation between North and South and between a 'verbal-priority' evangelistic emphasis vis-à-vis a 'holistic mission' one – an important conversation continued to give Lausanne a sense of a common journey. These events also kept monitoring and addressing the state of world evangelisation, of mission practice and even mission theology.

The 1980s closed with Lausanne II, which took place in Manila, Philippines, in July 1989 and gathered 3,000 participants from 170 countries under the theme *Proclaim Christ until he comes: calling the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world*. This event is best known for being a 'catalyst of over 300 partnerships and new initiatives, in the developing world and elsewhere'¹⁷ and produced, under the leadership of John Stott, the *Manila Manifesto*. This Manifesto had 31 clauses, which were based on the Lausanne Covenant, and came out as a 'corporate expression' of the event participants.¹⁸ While a lot of effort was put into this Manifesto, it really did not win the minds and hearts of the evangelical worldwide community because it said little that had not already been said in the Covenant and because it was a mosaic piece of work in which many voices were present but were unable to gather the evangelical community around a new call towards mission engagement.

The nineties were not easy years for the Movement. The leadership changed several times, financial resources were limited, and an encompassing agenda was not affirmed. In fact, the Movement became much narrower than the Covenant it had produced. The movement went into several directions and did not seem to have anything significant to contribute to the conversation around global witness and holistic mission.

¹⁷ 'History and Heritage of the Lausanne Movement', a paper produced for Cape Town 2010, www.lausanne.org/en/component/content/article.html?id=951.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Yet a surprise was waiting around the corner. The Movement gathered its remaining strength and worked toward another event, the Forum of World Evangelization, which took place in Pattaya in 2004 and gathered more than 1,500 Christian leaders to focus on 31 issue groups concerned with 'roadblocks to evangelism'.¹⁹ The most important outcome of that event was the selection of a new leadership that rekindled the Lausanne flame, gathered key church and worldwide evangelical leaders and was able to do significant fundraising. It started nurturing the dream of a Lausanne III, a process and an event which would bring new life to the task of world evangelization within the frame of holistic mission. Lausanne was alive again. Cape Town 2010 was coming into being and a well-drafted 'Cape Town Commitment' is the result of it.

Discerning the Footprints of the Lausanne Movement: The Lausanne Covenant, the Manila Manifesto and the Cape Town Commitment

The three main events in the history of the Lausanne Movement produced three key documents: the Lausanne Covenant, the Manila Manifesto and the Cape Town Commitment (CTC). The Lausanne Covenant, as already seen, became the touchstone of the entire movement while the Manila Manifesto never really moved into the agenda of evangelical missiology. When it came to Cape Town 2010 the care was evident and the agenda clear: The Lausanne Covenant was not to be replaced but there would be a new affirmation of identity as well as a call to action to be set out in a document instigated by key representative evangelical minds, in careful consultation with others. The two part CTC formed under the leadership of Chris Wright consists of the final decisions. It is still too early to say how much and how fully the CTC will be embraced by the evangelical missiological family and how fully it will captivate young leaders around the world, especially in the majority world. The early signs indicate that it has been well acclaimed and Lausanne itself is making it the agenda of the future of the Movement.

The first part of the Commitment written for CT2010 is a Confession of Faith, embedded in the language of love. There is a beauty and a rhythm to the document that enchants and calls the reader into it, while being clearly expressive of the evangelical faith. The second part, informed by CT2010, is a call to action and tries to be thematically reflective of the congress. This part is more prosaic and is more concerned with faithfulness to the programme and to the different players in it. In a typical evangelical way, it calls people to face the challenges of our time and respond to it through a plan of action, without forgetting to call all into repentance and into a new beginning. For the purpose of this chapter, we will attend to a few central

¹⁹ See <http://www.lausanne.org/2004-forum/2004-forum.html>.

highlights of this Commitment in order to identify key issues of today's evangelical missiology.

Evangelical Missiology Through the Lenses of the Cape Town Commitment

The CTC, as a missiological piece, has a double purpose. First, it conveys, with a pastoral touch, a theological message to the evangelical community. Second, it helps us become acquainted with the current status of the global evangelical movement's missiology. In this case, we may, through inductive reasoning, explore the theological categories that support this mission approach and the importance of each within the body of the Lausanne mission proposal. Here we find, in the first case, a text to be read; in the second case, the text is the reader.

The first theme is the Bible. John Stott had already stated that 'the primary question in every religion relates to the topic of authority: by what authority do we believe what we believe? And the primary answer which evangelical Christians... give to this question is that the supreme authority resides neither in the church nor in the individual, but in Christ and the biblical witness to him.'²⁰ And at Cape Town this centrality of the Scriptures was attested to as the supreme authority for designing mission models and setting the criteria that should guide their priorities.

Behold the Authority, the Bible

The first part of the Commitment has a specific section (section 6) focusing on Scripture and called 'We love God's Word'. It opens with a declaration from Psalms 119:47, expressing the love of Scripture and affirming evangelical faith in the full authority it has to govern 'our belief and our behaviour.' The Bible, therefore, continues to speak today through the Holy Spirit, who enlightens us and, by his intervention, sends out believers to carry out the great missionary commission. In the Bible God reveals himself, i.e., 'his identity, character, purposes and actions.' The Bible bears witness to Jesus Christ, who is the object of our message.

The Bible tells the history of the world, creation, the fall, redemption and the new creation; it reveals who we are, the meaning of why we are here in this world and where we are headed. 'This story of God's mission defines our identity, drives our mission, and assures us the ending is in God's hands.' To love Scripture is to love the life that it teaches us and to practice its teachings. A life lived in obedience to the Word, is a transformed life which is the testimony that should back up the missionary proclamation: 'There is no biblical mission without biblical living.'

²⁰ John Stott, *Evangelical Truth: A Personal Plea for Unity* (Leicester: IVP, 1999), 43.

The CTC reflects the dearest evangelical statements concerning the Bible and how it guides mission actions. It is a mission based on the Word of God and firmly established on the testimony of a transformed life. In this sense, the Bible is a dynamic word that transforms, that narrates God's plans throughout world history and invites God's people to get involved in this history so that the transformational plan is carried out everywhere at all times. It is a mission with the missionary in mind and is expressed through his/her transformed life; it is a testimonial mission situated in the realm of living out one's faith.

Trinity and Christcentrism

Lausanne also reflects evangelical Trinitarian conviction and Trinitarian implications for missionary work. The theological starting point is doctrinal in nature. An understanding of the Trinity frames the mission of God the Father, whom we come to know and love; the mission of the Son, who we proclaim to be the way, the truth, and the life; and the mission of the Holy Spirit, who witnesses through our spirits that we are children of God. Moreover, these declarations about the Triune God are made in the first section of the document.

In terms of both its intent (content) and its extent (length), Jesus as Son plays a privileged role in Trinitarian reality, outlining the mission model. This centrality of Jesus Christ as both proclamation and proclaimer of the mission has been an enduring characteristic of great evangelical declarations. It has also been characteristic of evangelical faith to affirm the doctrinal Christ and the doctrine of redemption in general as set forth in the ancient canons of classical theology. Christological emphasis falls on beliefs in the redemption and justification of sinners, in keeping with Anselm of Canterbury, for whom the soteriological mystery of Jesus is explained as the death of God the Son, which appeases the wrath of God the Father and thus redeems the sin of all humankind. By accepting this expiatory death, we receive eternal salvation by grace. This has exerted an enormous influence on theology since the midway through the first millennium. From this perspective, salvation stems from an act of death: the death of Jesus on the cross, as described in the Christological declaration of Lausanne.

The mission is primarily a *kerygmatic* event through which the truth of Christ as the Son of God conceived by the Holy Spirit is proclaimed and issued by the Spirit to bear witness of the Kingdom of God, to demonstrate with miracles the victory of this Kingdom over the hosts of evil, to die on the cross to bear our sins, to bodily rise from the dead to demonstrate victory over the powers of evil, and to ascend into heaven to rule as Lord and Saviour. This is the Christ who shall carry out God's judgement to 'destroy Satan... and establish the universal reign of God.' Mission is based on these Christological affirmations: to bear witness to he who has

and shall overcome. The mission is the annunciation of victory and the proclamation of the Kingdom that has already begun with the coming of the Son of God. Mission is also the proclamation of the truth of God, who proclaims not by words alone but also with acts of transformation and mercy. It is a mission that must be personified, as it was by the Son, and must demonstrate the merciful love of God through acts of mercy.

Integral Mission and Social Responsibility

This was one of the overarching themes of Lausanne I where the following was affirmed:

Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead.²¹

In an era of emerging theologies, political upheavals and ideological confrontations, particularly informed by Marxism, it was a declaration that proposed balance and encouraged social commitment, but which clung to the distinctive theological root of evangelical faith, which is the supremacy of salvation in Christ and the distinction between evangelisation and social action.

The statements made in 1974 were reaffirmed at Cape Town. The need to integrate evangelisation with social responsibility was reiterated. Part two of the CTC emphasised lines of commitment: work promoting peace, and condemning the exploitation of poor people, solidarity with those suffering from HIV/AIDS, support for those suffering violence. In short, a broad spectrum of missionary action fronts were highlighted that required active involvement, sensitivity, commitment, and courage.

After all these years, CTC added significant value to these statements by putting flesh on the bones of the core themes of integral mission. Part one of the document delves into theological arguments fundamental to missionary work, whereas part two is devoted to encouraging commitments to 'suffering creation'. By describing these sufferings, it explicitly presents the human groups to which our mission should be directed. This is because

²¹ The Lausanne Covenant, 1974, # 5: <http://www.lausanne.org/pdf/all-documents/lausanne-covenant.html?format=phocapdf>.

this mission is love in action; it is the way in which those redeemed by Christ act and demonstrate through their works the generous love of God.

The Missionary Proclamation in Pluralistic Contexts

The proclaiming of Jesus occurs in a current context of religious pluralism, growing agnosticism, and relativistic values. In this hostile context, mission is understood at Lausanne as apologetics. By affirming that truth is the starting point we make clear the primary struggles and commitments of this missiology. CT2010, declared that firm character and brave testimony were required to face fears:

We long to see greater commitment to the hard work of robust apologetics. This must be at two levels. (1) We need to identify, equip and pray for those who can engage at the highest intellectual and public level in arguing for and defending biblical truth in the public arena; and we must pray for them. (2) We urge church leaders and pastors to equip all believers with the courage and the tools to relate the truth with prophetic relevance to everyday public conversation, and so to engage every aspect of the culture we live in.²²

A mission of apologetics is 'hard work', and must be 'robust'. It is an apologetics in the context of a world where religious persecution exists, and where we are called to act understanding the cross of Jesus as a sign of devotion and sacrifice. It remembers with solidarity Christians' suffering under persecution because of their faith and sees them as an example of courage. It calls Christians to be willing to suffer as the prophets and apostles did and acknowledges that God can use suffering, persecution and martyrdom to advance his mission. 'Martyrdom is a form of witness which Christ has promised especially to honour.' A courageous mission of evangelisation is associated with bringing in the Kingdom of God and the CTC states that 'In the midst of all our legitimate efforts for religious freedom for all people, the deepest longing of our hearts remains that all people should come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, freely put their faith in him and be saved, and enter the kingdom of God.'²³

Freedom within Boundaries

Part two of CTC precisely measured the pulse of evangelical missiology in the world. Any potential ambiguities in the document are no fault of its writers, but of the evangelical movement itself because it is so diverse and ambiguous. Its ambiguity arises from its own concept of faithfulness. In its desire to be faithful to the truth, it is loath to risk rebuttal. The foreword gave us due warning: 'We distinguish what is at the heart of the Christian

²² *The Cape Town Commitment. A Commitment to Action II*, 2.

²³ *Ibid.*, IIC, 6.

gospel, i.e. primary truths on which we must have unity, from secondary issues, where sincere Christians disagree in their interpretation of what the Bible teaches or requires. We have worked here to model Lausanne's principle of "breadth within boundaries..." Mission accomplished, needs identified, boundaries preserved and truth affirmed are three emblems of missiology that discussed in this article and which represent keystones in evangelical missiology.

CT2010 took place a century after Edinburgh 1910. The Lausanne movement always saw itself in line with that century old event by affirming the need for evangelism, even whilst changing the language and enlarging the frontiers of the call, the task and the practical involvement in mission. The line of continuity between 1910 and 2010 is there whilst the missionary call is expressed in a fresh way:

Proclaim the gospel and let your life be your most authoritative proclaimer;
Proclaim the gospel and do it through word, life, deed and signs;
Proclaim the gospel and do it in culturally appropriate ways;
Proclaim the gospel and don't forget to stress the prophetic and transformational dimension of it;
Proclaim the gospel and do it together, as an expression of the family of God
Proclaim the gospel and use all available and responsible means of communication and available technology in order to do it.

The Lausanne movement symbolized it again through its third Congress, CT 2010, and declared it again through the CTC. The fact that it was done in collaboration with the World Evangelical Alliance is one more expression of the breadth within which it was done. Time will tell how much the Lausanne movement will keep helping and even challenging the evangelical family to embrace an understanding and practice of mission that carries the smell of God's love, the breath of salvation nurtured by the Gospel, the diverse universality of God's creation and the specific challenges, dilemmas and opportunities of this present generation. It is, as is has been said within Lausanne, all about 'the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world.'

THE THEOLOGICAL MOTIVATIONS FOR PENTECOSTAL MISSION

Wonsuk Ma

Abstract in Korean

20 세기 글로벌 기독교와 선교역사에서 가장 주목할만한 그룹이 바로 오순절 운동이다. 전 세계적으로 다양한 오순절 교회들이 괄목할만한 성장과 함께 선교에도 중대한 영향을 끼쳤다. 그럼에도 오순절 선교의 신학적인 동기는 명확하게 나타나기 보다는 설교나 간증 등의 형태로 표출되어 있다. 본 연구는 이러한 오순절 선교의 신학적인 근원을 찾아보고자 하는 시도로 우선 오순절 교인들이 편안하게 소유하고 있는 영적인 가치들을 살펴본다. 성서에 대한 특별한 경외심, 사도성의 회복에 대한 욕구, 예배에의 참여를 통한 공동체의 역할, 그리고 영적인 경험을 중시하는 가치, 그리고 영적세계에 대한 예민함 등이다. 오순절 선교의 신학적인 바탕으로는 소수 엘리트가 아니라 대중이 이뤄내는 신학화 과정, 성령세례라는 신조에 바탕을 둔 능력을 덧입는 신학, 이에서 일궈진 '만인 예언자'작으로 인한 모든 크리스천의 선교동력화, 20 세기 초반에 널리 퍼진 종말적인 기대, 그리고 영혼구원에 우선순위를 둔 선교접근을 들었다. 새로운 세기에서 오순절 선교의 성패는 변화하는 환경에서 이러한 신학적 바탕이 어떻게 창조적으로 표출되느냐에 달려있다.

The Growth of Global Pentecostalism

The growth of the modern Pentecostal movement is a remarkable story. During the century of its existence, it has grown from a 'fringe' group congregating every day in a run-down warehouse in downtown Los Angeles whose members were branded as religious fanatics to spread throughout the world, and influence other church traditions. Although numbers vary,¹ there is a consensus that it now numbers around half a billion throughout the world in various forms and traditions, including 'Charismatics' well integrated in various existing church families.² This chapter charts the growth of the movement and its developing missiology, demonstrating the complex interplay of Bible, experience and theology as it does so.

The significance of Pentecostal expansion was evident as the world church celebrated the centenary of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference. In its original 1910 conference, Pentecostals were in their infancy. The disappearance of the Azusa Street Mission in 1909, perhaps the most visible expression of Pentecostal Christianity, after a three-year

¹ Todd M Johnson and Kenneth R Ross (eds), *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910-2010* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010). Henceforth *AGC*.

² Johnson and Ross, *AGC*, 103.

controversial existence, may have been a relief to some Christian leaders who felt embarrassed by this 'tongue-babbling cultish group'.³ So, the Edinburgh conference did not need to worry about them. They were already struggling with issues surrounding the Catholic Church. However, Pentecostals did not 'die out'. In fact, the dramatic expansion of Christianity owes much to the exponential growth of Pentecostal churches and their variants.⁴ The African Independent Churches, most Chinese house church networks, and the majority of Latin American evangelicals are defined as Pentecostal in a broader sense.

By the time the world church came to celebrate the centenary of the Edinburgh conference in June 2010, the radical shift of the landscape of global Christianity was crystal clear. A hundred years ago, about 82% of all Christians lived in the global North, or the 'West,' including Oceania. But today, over 60% of Christians live in the global South, the three major southern continents.⁵ A steady decline of western Christianity and a corresponding growth of Christianity in the global South occurred between the two conferences. As much of the new Christianity in the South is Pentecostal or its variation, it is also noteworthy that in the West, growing segments of the church are Pentecostal-Charismatic. For example, in the midst of a rapid decline of Christians in Great Britain, the annual New Wine conferences among Charismatic churches are refreshing. In the 2010 Somerset conference, I witnessed about 15,000 participants of all ages savouring expositions of the Word, praises and various seminars.

The expectation is that the growth of Christianity in the South will continue, and so will Pentecostal worship and spirituality. If the twentieth century was marked by the exponential growth of African Christianity, all eyes are now on Asia, where Christianity has reached only 8.5% of its vast population of 3.5 billion (more than half of the world's population). The main growth engine is going to be Chinese Christianity as it is moving toward a 10% goal of the national population.⁶ When and if Asia achieves a 15% mark it will add 8.5 million to the current number, making Christians exactly one-third level of the world population.⁷ The share of Pentecostals will be significant in this growth.

While evangelism and church expansion have been the focus of Pentecostal mission, it is also important to note that so-called 'mercy ministry' has been an integral part of Pentecostal mission practice if not,

³ Cecil M Robeck, Jr, *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 134.

⁴ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 63.

⁵ Based on the figures found in 'Distribution of Christians, 1910-2010', *AGC*, 59.

⁶ 'Christianity in Eastern Asia, 1910-2010', *AGC*, 140-41.

⁷ 'Christianity's Centre of Gravity, AD 33-2100', *AGC*, 53.

until recently, its official statements.⁸ Countless orphanages, various levels of educational institutions, relief work, and others have been deeply ingrained in 'soul-saving' activities. Often without any intentional or serious theological reflection, Pentecostals, perhaps as they are from lower social strata, have instinctive solidarity with the poor and suffering. Two recent publications may serve as useful illustrations. The first, *Not by Might, Nor by Power*,⁹ looks into the Latin American Child Care programme of the US Assemblies of God World Mission. It records the growth of the educational programme for poor families throughout Latin America and its impact on societies. From this success the author constructs a Pentecostal mission theology of social engagement. The second, *Global Pentecostalism* by Miller and Yamamori,¹⁰ is a summary of a four-year field study of growing congregations in the global South, who were intentionally engaging with issues that societies and communities are facing. It found that most of the congregations meeting these requirements were Pentecostal. This sociological study reveals that Pentecostal mission thinking and practice include care for the suffering. The book, however, challenges Pentecostals on two fronts: to move beyond the evangelism-church planting dimension; and to construct appropriate theology to provide Pentecostals with a valid conceptual ground for social engagement.

Inquiry at Hand

This study probes the theological motivation for such exponential growth. Considering that such expansion requires the agency of Pentecostal believers, the study looks at hermeneutical roots and missional theology of Pentecostalism. This two-stage inquiry is appropriate for the 'grassroots' nature of Pentecostal theologization, a process which is often participatory and context-based: it is undertaken by people in the pews and responds to immediate human needs. The crux of this process, therefore, is not trained academic theologians, but preacher-pastors.¹¹ Consequently, Pentecostal theology is deeply imbedded in prayers, sermons, songs and non-verbal expressions of its spirituality. This makes a theologian's first work a description, articulation and analysis of imbedded theological assumptions and arguments.

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⁸ Article III, 'Constitution of the Assemblies of God', revised, Aug 8-11, 2007, Indianapolis, in http://agchurches.org/Sitefiles/Default/RSS/AG.org%20TOP/2007_Constitution_and_Bylaws.pdf (accessed 21/07/2011).

⁹ Doug Petersen, *Not by Might, Nor by Power: A Pentecostal Theology of Social Concern in Latin America* (Oxford: Regnum, 1996).

¹⁰ Donald E Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

¹¹ Julie C Ma and Wonsuk Ma, *Mission in the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010), 227-41 under the title 'Local Church, Worship, and Theological Formation'.

Hermeneutical values are a set of orientations inherent in Pentecostal spirituality and theology. These characteristics have critically contributed to the identity of Pentecostal believers and to their theological framework, although implicitly expressed. These values also guide Pentecostals in interpreting the scriptures and their religious experiences. Although evolved throughout its history and expressed in various forms in different contexts, they still remain as constants among Pentecostal believers. They may provide clues to defining Pentecostalism.

Which Pentecostalism?

While Pentecostalism can be defined and characterized in various ways, for this reflection it seems to be convenient to limit to the first wave, denominational (or 'Classical') Pentecostals. They are more identifiable than Charismatics whose mission theology and action is shaped by their denominations. They are less 'messy' than the third category sometimes called indigenous Pentecostals or Neo-Charismatics. Strictly speaking, it is not a category, but a catch-all holding bay for a great diversity of expressions which share Pentecostal core values including Chinese house church networks, African Independent Churches, and the Third Wave movement. Tentatively, therefore, we may be able to claim that the 'values' are more broadly owned by various Pentecostal families, whereas the 'theological threads' are more of the classical Pentecostal families. The longer history of first wave Pentecostals makes them more doctrinally coherent and more articulate in their theology and spirituality than the others. However, even within this group the matter is not that simple. There is great theological diversity among classical Pentecostals particularly outside the western hemisphere. For example, the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Korea, the largest single congregation in the world, is part of the global Assemblies of God family. However, some of its theological components and spiritual expressions are vastly different from its western cousins. In the global scene, it is also important to remember that the first category is the smallest among world Pentecostal families.

Pentecostal Hermeneutical Values

Any theological investigation needs to seriously consider hermeneutical strategies of a particular group. Pentecostal's hermeneutical strategy influences how to read the scriptures and interpret one's life towards their theological construct. Obviously much of Pentecostal's unique hermeneutical ethos was emerging in the nineteenth century. The following discussion is intended to be a brief presentation of key hermeneutical sources for Pentecostal mission theology.

'People of the Book': Scripture and Life

Pentecostals have been called the 'people of the book' for their unquestioned acceptance of the authority, and their literalistic reading of the Bible.

The first characteristic is the non-critical reading of the Bible, or perhaps more accurately the post-critical reading by Pentecostal academics and the pre-critical reading by Pentecostals in the pew. Like their conservative evangelical cousins, early Pentecostals had a firm belief in the (almost mechanical) inspiration of the scripture. This was part of the general trend against the intellectual inquiries and the critical reading of the Bible, originating in nineteenth century German scholarship and gradually spreading to Europe and North America. Hence, any attempt to critically study the scriptures used to be viewed as a theologically 'liberal' practice. This attitude has been further reinforced among the majority of non-western Pentecostals who live in places where sacred scriptures are never questioned. They are objects of reverence and obedience, and this 'evangelical' attitude toward the Bible is believed to be the basis for the Christian dynamic of the global South.¹²

Pentecostals have maintained a notion that the more literally one takes the scripture, the more faithful he or she becomes to the word of God, thus the will of God. Triggered from their reading of narratives in the Gospels and Acts, the historicity of events contained in the narratives is never questioned. Furthermore, the inclusion of certain narratives in the scriptures was also taken as proof for a normative pattern. Speaking in tongues as 'the initial physical evidence' of baptism in the Holy Spirit is based on the recurrence of spirit-filled tongue-speaking in Acts. Naturally Pentecostals fully subscribe, therefore, to the historicity and authenticity of supernatural events recorded in the Scripture. Their unique view of Scripture and the Holy Spirit allows Pentecostals to collapse the time gap between biblical times and the present establishing a link between the early church and the Azusa Street Mission. They simply assume that miracles included in the biblical narratives are repeatable today. This comes with advantages as well as disadvantages. The Bible to the Pentecostals is not an ancient book at all.

The temporal truncation also collapses the distance between God and humans, or the sacred and the secular. The transcendent God is now immanent. They expect to 'hear the voice of God' from the book. Narratives have a particular appeal as the process of reading will soon become the process of participation: the readers find themselves in the midst of the story, be it of healing or of miracles. This ability to 'time travel' provides lively religious experiences. The God of Exodus, for example, is expected to appear here and now allowing the believers to have a similar experience of God's intervention. Thus the interplay of such a

¹² Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Bible reading and experience-oriented religious life creates a spiral effect to enhance a highly engaged Christian life with God's reality. A Pentecostal's 'pre-critical' reading of the Bible naturally results in a literal reading, leaving little room for spiritualizing or demythologizing any 'irrational' record of the Bible.

Restorational Impulse: Apostolic Vision

As the twentieth century approached, there was a heightened interest in eschatology. One stream was the expectation of the early church restored with the manifestation of the spiritual gifts of prophecy, healing and an outpouring of the Holy Spirit as recorded in Acts and 1 Corinthians. Camp meetings were a common annual feature for devout believers and their families to experience personal revival. One of the most popular words among the late nineteenth century Holiness and early twentieth century Pentecostal believers was 'apostolic', reflecting the expectation and yearning for the restoration of church life as is recorded in the book of Acts. The dawning of the new century reinforced their eager expectation of the 'latter rain' to mark the end of the end time.

The modern Pentecostal movement has developed its unique mission-oriented theology of the Holy Spirit and Christian life. With their unique experiences such as baptism in the Holy Spirit and tongues as its accompanying sign, early Pentecostals understood themselves as being people called for a specific task. Considering that the advent of the Spirit gave birth to the church, the very foundation of its existence is missional. Accordingly, spiritual baptism has been closely linked to witnessing (Acts 1:8), and some early Pentecostal leaders advocated tongues as a practical missionary tool.¹³ This unique theological understanding shaped a peculiar self-identity as people empowered for God's mission. Pentecostals were countercultural both in the church and in society, and courageously endured ridicule and marginalization. Yet throughout its history, Pentecostalism has flourished where Christian presence had been in existence, instead of 'virgin' Christian frontiers. In this sense, Pentecostalism is a revival and renewal movement, challenging and energizing the church to recover its 'apostolic' authority and call to witness for Christ to the ends of the earth. Evangelism and church planting have been at the core of Pentecostal mission, partly due to its eschatological orientation, and also as part of the early twentieth century evangelical Christianity.

¹³ James R Goff, Jr, 'Initial Tongues in the Theology of Charles Fox Parham', in Gary B McGee (ed), *Initial Evidence: Historical and Biblical Perspectives on the Pentecostal Doctrine of Spirit Baptism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 57-71.

Participatory Process: Place of Community

The role of community is the focal point of religious life and of the hermeneutical process. The work of the Holy Spirit in community formation is experienced at least in two fronts: bringing people around common spiritual experience, and breaking barriers that divide God's people. In the Azusa Street Mission the common experience of the Spirit baptism brought together people of different races, social strata and ecclesiastical affiliations. At the turn of the twentieth century, white and Afro-Americans worshipping together was a radical counter-cultural departure from the norm. The division of the movement along racial lines has become a stark reminder of human sinfulness and failure against the Spirit's intention and work. However, this amazing potential continued to appear throughout its history. In the Philippines in the 1980s, a sociologist discovered close relationships between Pentecostals and Charismatic Catholics despite the hostility between Protestants and Catholics in the Philippines.¹⁴

At the centre of Pentecostal community formation is worship. It provides a space and time for religious experiences, theological formation and the shared process of theology-making. Worship is incredibly participatory in nature, often blurring the demarcation between the pulpit and the pews. One excellent example is the 'testimony' time, where anyone can be the 'main speaker'. By publicly sharing one's religious experience 'to praise the Lord' or 'to plea to the Lord', any member of the community contributes to the corporate deposit of theology and also for the community to exercise the 'gift' of discernment, evaluation and shared ownership of the presented experience and its interpretation. This 'democratic' nature of Pentecostal spirituality significantly enhances the community formation process. The exercise of spiritual gifts also takes place in a community setting, often a prophecy or a message in tongues ideally accompanied by an interpretation.

Even seemingly individualistic matters are experienced in the community context among Pentecostals. I recall that my own yearning for the baptism in the Spirit, as individualistic as it may seem, became the subject of a community prayer. I walked through this process together with many fellow Pentecostal believers. When I finally 'got it', we together celebrated in praise and worship. In Korea, it is common that a family's prayer becomes the prayer of the entire cell group and sometimes the cell leader will bring the family members to a prayer mountain for prayer and fasting for several days, while the entire cell member families are in prayer. The community-forming potential of the Holy Spirit is experienced in various dimensions.

¹⁴ Koichi Kitano, 'Socio-Religious Distance between Charismatics and Other Religious Group Members: A Case Study of the Philippines in the 1980s', *Journal of Asian Mission* 5:2 (2003): 231-242.

Experience: Lived-Out Spirituality

Another important aspect of restorational thinking is the recovery of religious experience. Flowing from the Pentecostal view of Scripture, Bible stories are read to experience an encounter with God and to show the miracles that contemporary readers can experience.¹⁵ Pentecostals never ‘demythologize’ the miracle stories of the Bible. The Pentecostal appropriation of the biblical narratives occurs in two ways: they transport the ancient stories to contemporary life (existentialization), they also ‘slip’ themselves into the ancient story of action (identification). The logic is simple: if the God of the Bible acted then, he can do the same today. For this reason, Pentecostals love to affirm that God is ‘the same yesterday, today, and forever’ (Heb 13:8).

This mindset promotes an expectation of having a tangible encounter with God through worship, prayer, sermons, Bible reading and the like. The nature of such encounters varies, but Pentecostals expect to ‘hear from the Lord’. Hearing from God is a common feature of Christianity. The distinctiveness of the Pentecostal experience of hearing is rather concrete and tangible, even if one can argue that tangibility is a subjective notion. Pentecostals are quite open to various channels of such revelation, including dreams, visions, audible or ‘inner’ voices, mental impressions, or a passage ‘being lifted from the page’. Such ‘voices’ are not limited to matters of spirituality, but apply almost to any issue in life. The other area of encounter is the ‘touch of the Lord’. This expression often refers to various experiences of God’s reality, be it divine healing, an overwhelming sense of God’s presence, relief from physical, emotional or circumstantial difficulties, a deep conviction of God’s truth, and the like.

Unlike the Reformers’ notion of the Holy Spirit as a shy member of the Trinity, Pentecostals, based on their reading in Luke-Acts, have re-profiled the Holy Spirit as the active player in the birth of the church, initiator of mission, and overseer of the spread of the gospel through empowerment.¹⁶ Many experiences, whether supernatural or circumstantial, are all carefully initiated by the Holy Spirit. This has led Pentecostals into two important theological conclusions: (1) The Holy Spirit interacts with God’s people through a wide range of religious experiences, including prophecy (11:22-23; 19:6; 21:9), dreams and visions (9:10; 10:3), hearing voices (10:19; 16:9; 18:9), healings (3:1-8; 4:30), and the like; and (2) such experiences embolden believers in their faith and lead them into opportunities to witness to the risen Lord. However, the role of experience in biblical interpretation is a controversial issue. Ideally the word should guide, inform

¹⁵ Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (London: T & T Clark, 2008).

¹⁶ Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984) and Robert P Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts* (London: T & T Clark, 2004).

and set a parameter to religious experience, while experience affirms the word. Pentecostals are called to guard themselves against the danger of placing experience over the word. Nonetheless, with their literalistic reading of the Bible, religious experiences have a definite role in strengthening their sense of call and commitment to sacred vocation, as baptism in the Spirit as stated below will illustrate so well.

People of the Spirit(s)

Pentecostals assume a worldview distinct from many contemporary western Christians, but closer to a non-western understanding of life and the world. For example, Pentecostals are conscious of spiritual beings, benevolent as well as malevolent, angels, spirits and demons, at work in human lives. For this reason, Pentecostals are the people of the S/spirit(s). With their liberal reading of the Bible, their emphasis on the experiential dimension of religious life, Pentecostals gravitate to the unseen and yet active world of the supernatural.

Two particular areas may be noteworthy. The first is, as noted briefly above, the development of a dynamic theology of the Holy Spirit. Pneumatology that is born out of one's radical experience of the Holy Spirit – be it baptism in the Spirit, healing, exorcism, 'hearing' him or 'seeing' his work – will be explosive. The Holy Spirit has become a miracle-working member of the Trinity. He empowers the church to be victorious in the middle of a hostile world providing signs and wonders as part of Christian witness. This orientation gives a shape of empowerment theology that is unique to Pentecostalism. The second area is the similarity between Pentecostal worldview and that of many non-western cultures where diverse spirits are perceived to operate on a daily basis generating a clash of (supernatural). Only the most powerful spirit (or God) earns a right to be worshipped, and the contest of such spiritual forces has become the basis for mass conversions.¹⁷ The explosion of Pentecostal-type Christianity in Africa, Asia and Latin America is partly attributed to these worldview similarities¹⁸ and to common interests in life such as healings, blessings, curses.¹⁹ Pentecostalism can supply functional substitutes to the felt and perceived religious needs because the worldviews have corresponding categories. This helps the missionary recognize the needs of the recipient.

¹⁷ Alan P Tippet, *People Movements in Southern Polynesia: A Study in Church Growth* (Chicago: Moody, 1971).

¹⁸ Walter J Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 18-80.

¹⁹ Julie C Ma, *When the Spirit Meets the Spirits: Pentecostal Mission to an Animistic Tribe of the Northern Philippines* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000).

Theological Resources for Pentecostal Mission

The mission implications of four theological beliefs unique to Pentecostalism will be discussed with reference to their historical development. The modern Pentecostal movement as an organized theological and spiritual tradition traces its origin to a conservative form of Protestantism found in the nineteenth century Holiness movement of North America.²⁰ Charles Parham and William J Seymour, the two most renowned Pentecostal ‘fathers’, are Holiness preachers. To illustrate beliefs and practices of early Pentecostals, reports will be used that were published in *The Apostolic Faith (TAF)* of the Azusa Street Mission of Los Angeles (1906-1909), the most representative Pentecostal periodical of the formative years of Pentecostal theological construction. A number of key players, already mentioned, are involved in Pentecostal theological construction: Scripture, the Holy Spirit interacting with Scripture, the community of believers,²¹ the Pentecostal experience and the wider social context. Context has been recognized as significant as Pentecostals in the global South become more prominent in the movement.

Baptism in the Spirit

This cardinal doctrine makes (classical) Pentecostals distinct from the rest of Christianity. Understood as an experience distinct from and subsequent to regeneration, belief in baptism in the Holy Spirit has caused a continuing debate between Pentecostals and Evangelicals. Based on the post-resurrection promise of the Lord that his followers would be baptized in the Holy Spirit, Pentecostals took it as a sign of the restoration of early church spirituality, especially the experience on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).²² For the present discussion, three aspects of this belief will be explored with mission as proclamation in mind: experience, its interpretation and consequences.

As discussed above, Pentecostalism has brought back the significant role of religious experiences. Testimonies abound to the powerful impact of experiences loosely termed ‘the baptism in the Holy Spirit’. Various life-changing stories are shared, although most North American classical Pentecostal churches insist on speaking in tongues as ‘the physical and initial evidence’. The sense of God’s overwhelming presence is a common element of these experiences, as recorded in the first issue of *TAF*:

²⁰ I am aware of arguments on multiple ‘springheads’ of the movement. For this reason, I used the qualifier, ‘organized’ theological and spiritual tradition.

²¹ Kenneth J Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutics for the Twenty-First Century: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 156-91.

²² Frank D Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).

Proud, well-dressed preachers come in to 'investigate'. Soon their high looks are replaced with wonder, then conviction comes, and very often you will find them in a short time wallowing on the dirty floor, asking God to forgive them and make them as little children. It would be impossible to state how many have been converted, sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost. They have been and are daily going out to all points of the compass to spread this wonderful gospel.²³

Speaking in tongues also brought tangible impact not only to the recipients of the Spirit baptism but also to those who witnessed them. It is no wonder that Pentecostalism spread like a wildfire. It is not only understood as a sign of the restoration of early church spirituality, it also shapes the self-identity of people who are called and commissioned to bring the news of salvation to the ends of the earth. It is also interpreted as the reception of power from above for witnessing in the context of Acts 1:8. The early Pentecostal literature made it clear that, 'The baptism with the Holy Spirit is not a work of grace but a gift of power.... The baptism with the Holy Ghost makes you a witness unto the uttermost parts of the earth. It gives you power to speak in the languages of the nations.'²⁴ Its biblical illustrations are often taken from Peter's bold preaching in Acts 2:14-40, and Stephen's courageous sermon in Acts 7:2-53. Last, especially at a popular level, baptism in the Spirit is understood to be the 'floodgate' of spiritual gifts including healing and miracles.

The consequences of this doctrine are evident in an unbending commitment to mission. With a strong sense of calling to be witnesses 'to the end of the earth', this revival movement quickly turned into a missionary movement. A catalogue of heroic missionary achievements, despite little or no training or support, is attributed to this sense of call. A zeal for preaching the 'full gospel' in which tongue-speaking often functions as a reinforcement is another consequence. Some early Pentecostals expected tongues to enable them to bypass laborious language-learning.²⁵ Third, after the pattern of Acts, signs and wonders are expected in the context of mission. This power-orientation makes Pentecostals bold witnesses with claims of healings and miracles, albeit with many controversies surrounding them. The net result is the fast spread of the Pentecostal message and the expansion of the Pentecostal movement globally. This pneumatologically-shaped missiology is well attested in a *TAF* report of an Azusa missionary in its early days:

A Pentecostal missionary has left for foreign lands, Bro Thos P Mahler, a young man of German nationality. He has the gift of tongues besides the knowledge of several. He left here for San Bernardino. He may go by way of

²³ 'Pentecostal Has Come: Los Angeles Being Visited by a Revival of Bible Salvation and Pentecost as Recorded in the Book of Acts', *TAF* 1 (Sept 1906), 1, col 1.

²⁴ 'The Enduement of Power', *TAF* 4 (Dec 1906), 2, col 2.

²⁵ 'Russians Hear in Their Own Tongue', *TAF* 1 (Sept 1906), 4, col 3.

Alaska, Russia, Norway, Germany and to his destination in Africa. As our brother was leaving, Bro Post spoke of his call and gave a message in tongues in regard to Bro Mahler which he interpreted as follows: 'I have anointed this dear one with my Spirit, and he is a chosen vessel to me to preach the gospel to many, and to suffer martyrdom in Africa.'²⁶

Prophethood of All Believers

This is closely related to the previous discussion on baptism in the Spirit. However, because of its significance in Pentecostal mission, a separate discussion is deemed necessary. This is almost a natural and logical outgrowth of the belief in baptism in the Holy Spirit. Peter's interpretation of the advent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost is important. In the Old Testament period, only a handful of leaders experienced the coming of the Spirit of God, such as the seventy elders (Num 11), selected judges, the first two kings of United Israel, and selected prophets. However, an eschatological expectation of the Old Testament is to break this exclusivity of the Spirit: everyone in God's community will experience the coming of the Spirit. This is the prophecy by Joel (2:28-29), which has its root in Moses' desire for the whole of Israel (Num 11:29). This democratization of the Spirit is the gist of Peter's sermon in presenting the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21).

If anyone in God's community is baptized in the Holy Spirit, regardless of age, gender and social status, the calling, empowerment and commission for God's work is for every believer, thus, 'prophethood of all believers'. This theological paradigm should be understood within the context of Christianity in the West at the turn of the twentieth century. In spite of various expressions of 'every believer's prophetic call', the dominant ministry paradigm among the established churches was clergy-oriented professionalism. Pentecostal theology was a powerful challenge to the established norm.

Of particular note is the significant contribution of women in Pentecostal mission. Later this is expressed in Korea through the mobilization of lay women leaders in David Yonggi Cho's well-known cell group system. Young people are also mobilized for mission in networks, such as Youth With A Mission. This liberates ministry from the exclusive hands of elite clergy. Often advocating short-term missionary service, YWAM and others have 'democratized' ministry and mission for every believer. Thirdly, an extension of this radical mission-thinking is the establishment and empowerment of, and transfer to, national and local leadership at the earliest opportunity,²⁷ a practice which has made Pentecostalism the fastest growing religious movement in our day.

²⁶ 'The Lord Sends Him', *TAF* 1 (Sept 1906), 4, col 1.

²⁷ Melvin L Hodges, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1963).

Eschatology

Early Pentecostals shared their eschatology with the late nineteenth century conservative pre-millennial orientation. The turn of the century provided a naïve expectation of the end of human history. Here is an example found in *TAF*:

All these 6,000 years, we have been fighting against sin and Satan. Soon we shall have a rest of 1,000 years.... We must go on to perfection and holiness, and get the baptism with the Holy Ghost, and not stop there, but go on to perfection and maturity.²⁸

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was taken as a sure sign of the end of the end time, the last opportunity for the greatest harvest of souls before the return of the Lord. This created an incongruent theological system for Pentecostals, adopting the dispensational scheme of human history. With the fast closure of the church age, or the age of grace, the church is to be taken to heaven, before the return of the age where Jews are dealt with through tribulation. This formed the awareness of living at the 'five-to-midnight' moment, giving an extremely small window of opportunity to save as many souls as possible. 'One-way ticket missionaries' were strongly motivated by the eschatological urgency. It was not unusual that engaged young women broke their engagements and left for their mission field.²⁹ This eschatological consciousness made them other-world oriented. Coupled with the religious consciousness of call and empowerment for witness, they are the best ingredients for the significant mission movement we have seen in the last one hundred years.

In spite of the powerful and positive contribution of this form of pre-millennialism with the expectation of the imminent return of the Lord, such clock-setting eschatology must expire sooner or later. As the movement enters the third generation, eschatological messages from Pentecostal pulpits have gradually disappeared to be replaced by this-worldly concerns, such as church growth, the message of blessings and health.³⁰ Fortunately, the dynamic motive of Pentecostal mission lies in the pneumatological interpretation rather than its temporal eschatological expectation, as the global Pentecostal movement has continued its growth even after the waning of an imminent eschatology.

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²⁸ 'The Millenium [*sic*!]', *TAF* 1 (Sept 1906), 3, col 3.

²⁹ For one example see S Shemeth, 'Trasher, Lillian Hunt', in Stanley M Burgess and Eduard M van der Maas (eds), *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 1153.

³⁰ For example, Wonsuk Ma, 'Pentecostal Eschatology: What Happened When the Wave Hit the West End of the Ocean', in Harold Hunter and Cecil M Robeck, Jr (eds), *The Azusa Street Revival and Its Legacy* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway), 227-42.

Primacy of 'Soul' Matter

Pentecostalism has all the crucial ingredients to become an unprecedented 'religion to travel', as well-evidenced in the exponential growth and spread all over the world in its wild diversity and creativity. Its evangelical heritage and the temporally oriented eschatology has focused Pentecostal missiology on evangelism and church planting. The rise of a social gospel in the middle of the twentieth century may have further encouraged the already narrowly focused attention. Mission impetus was also taken from the mission roadmap found in their favorite passage: '...from Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria and (finally) to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8). Crossing geographical boundaries, therefore, has been part of Pentecostal mission paradigm. Many brilliant social programmes have soul winning as their ultimate goal.³¹

This, however, may reveal the Pentecostal understanding of humans, sin and salvation. Every evil, be it personal or corporate, is traced to sin, and to Genesis 3 where separation from God resulted in spiritual damnation, physical suffering, broken society, and cursed environment. The Pentecostal view of restoration, therefore, reverses the order, beginning with the spiritual regeneration, and then personal (including the physical level, such as healing), communal (social) and even environmental, if the notion is conceived in Pentecostal mission framework.³² The upward social mobility of Pentecostals has been attributed to this paradigm.³³

Naturally 'revival' or 'renewal' is an important concept in Pentecostal thinking. The Pentecostal movement itself is often classified as a revival movement. The January 1907 issue of *TAF* reveals a glimpse of the Azusa Street revival:

The meeting went on till morning and all the next day.... Pentecost first fell in Los Angeles on April 9th [of 1906]. Since then the good tidings has spread in two hemispheres.... Wherever the work goes, souls are saved, and not only saved from hell but through and through, and prepared to meet the Lord at his coming. Hundreds have been baptized with the Holy Ghost. Many of them are now out in the field, and some in foreign lands, and God is working with them, granting signs and wonders to follow the preaching of the full Gospel.³⁴

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³¹ See for example, Calcutta Mercy Ministries, 'History' <http://www.buntain.org/about.html> (accessed on 15/03/2010).

³² *Teen Challenge*, the successful drug rehabilitation programme emphasises regeneration and baptism in the Spirit. David Batty and Ethan Campbell, 'Teen Challenge: 50 Years of Miracles', *Assemblies of God Heritage* 28 (2008), 14-21.

³³ David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

³⁴ 'Beginning of World Wide Revival', *TAF* 5 (January 2907), 1, col 1.

As Pentecostal missiology matures, an argument seems to gain ground that spiritual dynamism, evangelism, church growth and social service are not mutually exclusive.³⁵

Conclusion

If this short study in any way leaves an impression that Pentecostals have finally unlocked the secret of Christian mission, the reality is exactly its opposite. In the name of God's kingdom and renewal, church divisions were caused by this movement and unfortunately they have been part of its growth 'strategy'. Some of its serious blind spots, such as its eschatological expectation, are already presented. While they are praised for their creativity in contextualization, Pentecostals are also criticized for the ugly 'prosperity gospel'³⁶ and their extremely 'western' outlook and ethos. All in all, there is much for further reflection and study.³⁷

In the next decades, the progress of Pentecostal mission will depend on how Pentecostals preserve and strengthen their unique spiritual values and understand their changing contexts so that their theological constructs will respond to their missional call and contextual needs. The Bible will continue to play an important role, especially as the movement spreads increasingly in the global South. Expectation of the supernatural dimension of Christianity, the role of community and experience, as well as a more holistic worldview, will continue to play critical roles in Pentecostal religious life. Serious challenges and new opportunities will rise on the theological front, and any good theology will need to be locally grounded and relevant. This requires conscious engagement of Pentecostal values and context. If frontline workers such as pastors, evangelists and missionaries are to continue their critical role of popular theological construction, theological formation will be essential. Aided by Pentecostal theologians frontline leaders can protect Pentecostal communities from consumerism-driven, self-serving popular religion, and become relevant to their context. Pentecostal eschatology, as seen in the past, may not serve its earlier pivotal role, and so may be the way of the baptism in the Spirit. However, the latter's empowerment theology, incorporated in the prophethood of all believers, will remain high in Pentecostal theological agendas, if the theology is to remain 'Pentecostal'. The primary purpose of soul-winning is

³⁵ Young-hoon Lee, *The Holy Spirit Movement in Korea* (Oxford: Regnum, 2009), 126-27.

³⁶ See Hwa Yung, 'The Missiological Challenge of David Yonggi Cho's Theology', in Wonsuk Ma, et al (eds), *David Yonggi Cho: A Close Look at His Theology and Ministry* (Baguio, Philippines: APTS Press, 2004), 85-90; Wonsuk Ma, 'David Yonggi Cho's Theology of Blessing: Basis, Legitimacy and Limitations', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 35:2 (April 2011), 140-159.

³⁷ Julie C and Wonsuk Ma, *Mission in the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal-Charismatic Missiology*.

expected to continue, although the Pentecostal horizon in mission thinking and practice has become more holistic and inclusive. At the same time, more locally motivated theological agendas should surface, such as reconciliation in places where religious and racial conflicts raise tensions.

Classical Pentecostals have the most theological and institutional resources. In non-western lands they look radically different from their North American or European 'mothers', who are not necessarily growing. This is a serious challenge to their century-old theology and constantly institutionalizing ethos. Yet they may also empowering the rest of the Pentecostal-charismatic churches. Together they should continue their engagement in new frontiers of mission because to remain faithful to the scriptures, to Pentecostal spiritual heritage, and yet be relevant to the immediate context will pose a significant challenge to emerging Pentecostal mission communities throughout the world.

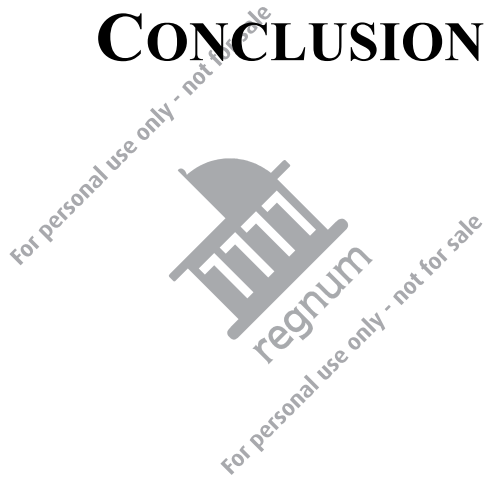


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CONCLUSION



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CONCLUSION: SETTING SAIL FOR THE FUTURE

Emma Wild-Wood and Peniel Rajkumar

The contributors to this volume have provided a many-faceted view of missiology in the early twenty-first century. Focusing on theology, the Bible and experience they have explored the ways in which those three complex elements form foundations for missiological thought in the rich and varied global phenomenon that is contemporary Christianity. This final chapter intends to peer into the future and to suggest ways in which missiology will continue to develop. The parable of the man who built his house upon the sand makes us nervous of inadequate, shifting foundations and causes us to seek improved materials, techniques and tools, honed for the particular conditions of building, in order to best use the sure foundations of the Bible, theology and experience. Since the future emerges from the present, a summary of the different sections of this volume, identifying some of the common themes and emerging ideas, will indicate directions in which the present is pointing. In such an endeavour a particular attitude and mode of enquiry are necessary and they are provided in two interlacing themes that permeate the writing of a number of contributors. The attitude is one of deep listening to God and to God's world. The mode of enquiry is that of a joyful pursuit of wisdom. Mission action that is born of such reflective practice will truly participate in God's mission of love to all creation. In the spirit of collaborative endeavour we suggest questions to readers who may find wise answers in their circumstances that are different to our own.

Experience

The controversy surrounding the use of experience as a missiological foundation has already been noted in the introduction and writers of the first chapters identified what might be meant by 'experience'. Experience, say Janice Price and Anne Richards, can be understood as all 'human elements'. They are foundational for mission because God's mission is relational, as the Trinity is, and God's mission in the world is both incarnated in particular contexts and crosses human boundaries. A focus on experience enables us to see what actually 'is' before we move to what 'ought' to be. Furthermore, experience may influence our missional aspirations: some may wish to claim that all experiences are valid for the development of missiology; others consider that a process of sifting, prioritising and interpretation is involved so that particular experiences

provide a foundation for the church's mission in the world. This process occurs over time as churches develop traditions, some of which are granted formal authority within the church. Traditions emerge through the interpretation of experience using Scripture. Thus a set of interpreted experiences becomes authoritative. Beverley Mitchell calls for a critical look at the traditions that have formed us. She argues for an historical enquiry that examines the experiences of the past in order that we know where we have come from and who we are. This is mission enabling, she says, because the process helps transform ourselves and others. The discipline of history enables the story of others to emerge and it allows critical reflection on the stories we have told of ourselves for years. It enables discernment through a reading of the signs of the times. In this approach church traditions are recognised as foundational for Christian peoples, but they are foundations whose continuing strength and support should be examined to see whether they maintain elements that run counter to God's loving mission to creation.

The judgement of experience has in the last century taken a different path from that previously involved in the development of church tradition. Some have plumbed their cultural traditions for resonances with the Christian gospel that better enable them to comprehend God's mission in the world. There is a venerable African tradition of acknowledging the richness of proverbs, community ethics, and societal structures for Christian teaching and church growth.¹ *Ubuntu*, a community ethic, summed up in the Swahili proverb *mtu ni watu*, 'a person is people,' has become a popular way of speaking of this. Others have seen oppression in such traditions and have worked to overcome them. This latter approach has often prioritised the experience of the marginalised, women,² children, and the poor, stating that God has a loving preference for those who are neglected and impoverished by others and that an appropriate missional response to their situation is one of service and of justice. Yet, as Deenabandhu Manchala, Peniel Rajkumar and Dayam Joseph Prabhakar demonstrate, the marginalised should not be seen as only recipients of missional service and advocacy for justice but as actors in mission. Those who have been 'missioned unto' are called to engage in God's mission themselves. The Dalit articulation of mission as informal, local, and questioning of human barriers brings the location, the action and the direction of mission into question. In accepting the varieties of experience mission becomes multi-layered and multi-directional. This is evident among Pentecostal movements and also through the movement of peoples across the globe: migrants are now missionaries in the traditional heartlands of the modern missionary movement.

¹ See for example the works of John Mbiti in the 1960s and 1970s and those of Benezet Bujo and Laurenti Magesa today.

² See writings by the members of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians for critiques of some aspects of cultural theology.

For Zlatina Karavaltchev the ultimate experience, upon which all others stand and fall, is that of the inner, personal and spiritual communion with Christ offered to each Christian. It is this experience, she says, which engenders the church's participation in mission and it is this that is the aim of that mission. Her secondary experience is the context in which the church must work. The particular dynamics of the context must be understood if the church is effectively to communicate the Gospel and the mystical relation with God that it offers to the world. Whilst the inner relation with Christ and the outer social and ideological context can both be understood as a set of experiences, Karavaltchev in no way understands them as equal. In her form of counter-cultural theology the wider context is deleterious to the inner experience. However, she works for a change in context so that this is no longer the case. This inner, spiritual experience can be overlooked in mission studies as it analyses mission action and desires to find appropriate ways of engaging with the world. A number of chapters in this volume point towards a future of reflective practice and spirituality which attends to the 'inward' listening and discerning processes in a discipline that has most often been focused upon outward action. Similar foci are emerging from different traditions: the South African missiologist, Klippies Kritzinger, for example, has developed a model for missional reflection which has spirituality at its heart. Emerging from the praxis of the South African Missiological Society,³ often associated with a liberative approach to mission, it aims to be integrative, contextual, relational and communal. It scrutinises the context, the agency, the church and the tradition in order that mission agents can discern opportunities for change and examine their own assumptions and actions. A focus on spirituality recognises its importance for mission and investigates the influence of different forms of spirituality on mission. The expectation of this model is that God goes before us in mission and that our task is to read the 'signs of the times' and join in where God is already at work. Like those of our contributors, it is a model of mission that is theologically rooted in *missio dei* Trinitarian theology and one which emphasises the reading of the Bible as a tool for missional and transformative living.

In the section on experience discussions of two of the 'transversal' subjects that complemented the themes of the Edinburgh 2010 study process are evident, contextualisation, inculturation and dialogue and subaltern voices. It is interesting to note that, despite the involvement of four women in this section, none of them chose to highlight the Edinburgh 2010 transversal subject 'women in mission'. Yet a focus on particular experiences and, thus on difference, has allowed women to enter the discussion in a way that might not have been possible in 1910. Are we in a

³ JNJ Krizinger & W Saayman, 'Introduction' in Kritzinger and Saayman, *David J Bosch: Prophetic Integrity, Cruciform Praxis* (Dorpspruit, Cluster Publications, 2011), 4-6.

post-patriarchal age? Some areas of the world have radically adjusted gender expectations in the last hundred years in order to achieve greater equality. However, we forget those for whom little has changed if we do not highlight gender differences and indeed, age differences, which was another transversal subject.

The Bible

Bible and Mission – Mission in the Bible, one of the transversal subjects for Edinburgh 2010 was naturally given a prominent position in the Foundations for Mission study theme. For many Christians across the globe the Bible is one of the few books they possess and their life is lived in constant reference to it. Thus the Bible is understood through the lens of the immediate context and that context is interpreted through the biblical texts (an aspect also highlighted in the chapter, ‘The theological motivations for Pentecostal mission’). Such an intimate relationship with the text produces dynamic and fresh interpretations. Contributors provided insights to reading the Bible that are emerging from the World Church and the lived realities of Christian people engaged with the sacred text. They took different approaches yet all affirmed the power of Biblical texts to inspire, to transform and engage for mission. As is apparent from the chapters, experience cannot be left to one side when studying Biblical texts. All the contributors mention their own experience and/or their wider context demonstrating that an awareness of experience is fruitful and enriching in interpreting the Bible for mission. Mary Mikhael adheres to the coherence of the grand sweep of Biblical narrative (also evident in ‘Foundations for Mission in a Movement of World Evangelization’) and reminds readers of the missionary nature of the Bible and the familiar missionary narrative of the book of Acts. Mission in the Bible gives Christians guidance for contemporary mission. Mikhael notes the resonance of Acts for Christian mission in the lands of the Bible, which have both given and received forms of mission over two millennia. Jacques Matthey’s biblical missiology engages with the figure of Wisdom in Proverbs, a book which is frequently overlooked by missiologists. A close acquaintance with Wisdom, says Matthey, implies a doxological mission which begins with joyful, Spirit-filled, praise and respect of God and celebration of God’s creation, joining in with God’s loving actions within it. In some contrast to Mikhael’s understanding of missiological obedience to the commands ‘go, do, send, act’, Matthey calls for a missionary wisdom that is ‘passive, meditative and festive’. The Old Testament text allows a recognition of God’s loving mission in the acts of creation and sustaining of the universe; Trinitarian acts which provide a mandate to humanity for a mission of creation care. Ecological perspectives on mission are also highlighted by Nestor Míguez who indicates that creation care is the first mission obligation given to humans.

Miguez speaks from an historical context in which the Bible has been used as a tool of oppression. He raises a number of postcolonial questions about the position of the Bible in a context where the creation of metanarrative from reading the Bible as a single, cohesive text has bolstered the power of one group of people to dominate over another. The insights of postcolonial theory have criticised the entanglements between the empire and the Bible. They have highlighted how processes related to the production, translation and distribution of biblical texts can be implicated in the expansionist programmes of the empires. These critical views pose questions on the 'ethics' of mission that has been established and sustained on biblical bases. Such perspectives, however, need to be held in juxtaposition with the reality which prevails in most post-colonial contexts – that the Bible has been appropriated by the colonised people for the purposes of decolonization and for criticism of the empire in its colonial and well as neo-colonial forms. The Bible has proved to be an ethical source of mission shaping the contours of mission and correcting its courses as necessary. Miguez demonstrates the way in which a new reading of the Bible can be liberative for the marginalised and, therefore, for the whole world, because it can bring the values of the Kingdom of God to contemporary society. For liberative readings of scripture the 'Nazareth Manifesto,' when Jesus claims to fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah (Lk 4:18-21), is a key text whose focus on the poor, imprisoned, blind and oppressed, influences the interpretation of other biblical texts. In 20-21, Acts 1:8 and 2 Cor 5:18-19 have all become texts of missional focus which reformulate missionary emphasis away from Matthew 28:18-20, the text which most defined the modern missionary movement and remains significant in many circles today.⁴

The recognition of the power of texts to set the tone and direction of mission is manifest in the chapters. Simangaliso Kumalo also takes a liberative stance and draws on resources developed in South Africa for collaborative reading of the Bible in context. Biblical scholars and lay Christians read the Bible together in Contextual Bible Study, stories come alive as resonances between contemporary injustices and those of Biblical times emerge. Again, texts – and here it is stories – which have often been overlooked are used to provide a way of examining the status quo and exploring opportunities for change. The narrative, the characters and the plot are utilised to imagine a transformation of society. Kumalo is concerned by those whose Biblical interpretation he identifies as quietist, spiritual and other worldly. For him God's mission is apparent in bringing in the loving and just values of the Kingdom on earth; (re)education in Biblical interpretation is required for the task. He considers that a critical

⁴ Sarojini Nadar, 'The Bible *In* and *For* Mission,' 131-154, in Desmond van der Water et al, *Postcolonial Mission: Power and Partnership in World Christianity* (Upland, CA: Sopher, 2011), 139.

consciousness is required which collides with the sorts of interpretation that Wonsuk Ma identifies as Pentecostal 'pre-critical' readings.⁵

In the near future we may see lines being drawn more firmly between conservative and liberal Biblical interpretations. The fissures will take place within the global South and North, not just between South and North, as Philip Jenkins has suggested.⁶ They will lie between those who consider that the best way that they can participate in God's mission is to point to eternal salvation in Jesus Christ and to illustrate the power of the Spirit through signs and wonders and those who consider that salvation and demonstration of the reign of God begins with freedom from societal oppression and exclusion today. The textual significance of the Bible also raises questions: in a post-modern world where images are often preferred over words and where in other contexts sections of communities remain predominantly oral, do we need to speak less of biblical texts and more of biblical principles? How might those principles be identified? If they do have an overarching reach, can they include principles adopted by pre-biblical and post-biblical communities?

Theology

The Edinburgh 2010 conference identified the *missio Dei*, the church and the Kingdom of God as the three foundational elements for a theology of mission. These elements are all visible in the four chapters in the theology section. It is perhaps no surprise, that whilst the contributors represent a broad spectrum of Christian tradition, three of the four come from the continent of Asia where much innovation in Christian theology is taking place. The influence of *missio Dei* theology which developed during the course of the twentieth century from an understanding of the Father's sending of Son and Spirit is assumed in most of the chapters in this volume and is prominent and re-examined in the four chapters on theological foundations for mission. Damon So reflects upon the indivisibility of the nature and work of God. He describes God as loving, communal, self-giving, three-persons, pouring out love and giving in mission to the world. So reformulates dominant Christian tradition. He leads readers through the familiar pit-falls of Trinitarian theology and focuses his own theology on Christology. *Missio Dei* theology gave mission a centrality in God's being and economy that had been absent from traditional Trinitarian theology and from formulations that spoke of 'missions' or 'the church's mission'. Yet there has been concern that some Trinitarian formulations over-conceptualise the dynamism of the God-head and dilute the imminence of

⁵ For an expression of one side of this collision see, Nadir, 'The Bible *In and For* Mission,' 140-147.

⁶ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

God and so renewed attention has been given to the persons of God. The theme of Edinburgh 2010 was 'Witnessing to Christ' and the Christocentric emphasis within a Trinitarian frame is also evident in the Capetown Commitment. It represents a desire to confirm what is unique about the Christian faith and to be confident in our Christian calling whatever form our mission or missiology might take. Christina Manohar's article reflects a significant rise in attention to pneumatology from the latter part of the twentieth century. The rise of the Pentecostal movements and their emphasis of *pneuma-praxis* have influenced the growth in this branch of theology. Encounter with other religious faiths has also encouraged greater attention to the Spirit. Manohar engages with thought from both East and West. She demonstrates that as theology moves from the West it necessarily engages with new realities. Her intentional contextuality shows up the implicit contextuality of western theology. Doctrinal theology can no longer be articulated without it being avowedly aware of the context which forms it.

Manohar's use of Indian religious insights alongside Christian ones, and her engagement with Hindu, Buddhist and Jain theology as being resonant for a Christian understanding of the Spirit, also demonstrates the depth of inter-faith dialogue that has been a mark of much Indian theology for some time. This engagement might still be a form of *praeparatio evangelica*; recognising a truth in other religions that allows God to be at work in them preparing for receptivity to Gospel. Thus it might understand the study of them as an exploration of missionary context in which conversion to Christianity remains the aim. However, many Asian theologians, like Edmund Chia, not only believe that an encounter with the ideas and people of other religions is essential to the being of the church in Asia, part of who it is and how it acts in God's mission, but that such an encounter changes an understanding of that mission by focusing upon the establishment of the values of the Kingdom of God. Chia draws on the theology of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC) and on the work of Peter Phan which begins with the questions, how is God at work in situations of pluralism? What is the role of other beliefs in his plan? Phan, indeed, draws on Trinitarian theology to answer this question. He inverts the normal theological progression from Creator, to Christ, to Spirit by arguing that we should start with 'our experiences of salvation' and 'our present-day experiences of the Holy Spirit and then show how this Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus and end with Jesus' revelation of the mystery of God the Father'.⁷ The Spirit is the facilitator of dialogue among other faiths, the Spirit can be recognised in other faiths and can lead all to a recognition of the oneness of God and a delight in diversity. Edmund Chia highlights a change in missional emphasis from 'making disciples' to a focus on the care of

⁷ Peter Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously: Asian Perspectives on Inter-faith Dialogue* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007), 38.

others, 'when you did it for the least you did it for me.' It is a mission that remains Christological but it changes from intentionally looking for followers of Christ to one of service together. The focus is on identifying where God is already at work, where Kingdom values can be seen. Thus the *missio Dei* involves the participation of all humanity and not simply the Christian church. Not only is God at work beyond the church but in those who confess different religious faith. Whilst the contributors focus on Christian mission, some allude to the mission of all humanity. It is likely that we will see more of this kind of reflection as theologians engage with thinkers from other faiths. It is also likely that convictions will continue to run in the opposite direction; that witness to Christ entails a call to all to bend the knee at the name of Jesus; that the Spirit empowers Christians to preach, teach to serve, and to advocate in order that all may know that Jesus Christ is Lord; that the priority of focus should be on the saving of souls. These questions were more fully raised in the second study theme of Edinburgh 2010 and reflections have been produced in two volumes.⁸ Significant ecumenical work has been achieved in a practical document endorsed by the World Council of Churches, the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue and the World Evangelical Alliance which developed consensus on how Christians should behave towards people of other faiths.⁹

Petros Vassiliadis also places great emphasis on the reign of God. The focus for him is the place of the church in bringing in the values of the Kingdom. In 1910 the Orthodox churches had little part in ecumenical mission conferences. Today they are regularly represented and the impact of Orthodox theology beyond its historic areas of influence, particularly in western academies, is significant and enriching. Missiology is no exception. Orthodox theology has influenced the understanding of the relationship between the persons of the Trinity, the role of the Spirit and comprehensions of church and sacrament. It ensures a close connection between ecclesiology and missiology, expecting a continuous and dynamic relationship between the two. Petros Vassiliadis presents a uniting mode of engagement which synthesises diverse theological elements, bringing them together in the central act of the Eucharist. His chapter recalls the eschatological purpose of God's mission to bring us back to true communion with Father, Son and Spirit. In many ways this approach to theology resonates with reflections on harmony so often emphasised by Asian theologians. They wish to establish a different mode in which

⁸ Lalsangkima Pachuau and Knud Jørgensen (eds), *Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic Age: Christian Mission Among Other Faiths* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011) and Marina Ngursangzeli Behera (ed), *Interfaith Relations After One Hundred Years: Christian Mission Among Other Faiths* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011).

⁹ *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct*, 2011. <http://www.worldevangelicals.org/resources/view.htm?id=288> (accessed 22/12/2011).

missiological reflection takes place, bringing diversity together. Yet for Asian theologians there is a stated commitment to accept tension and difficulty, to maintain the flourishing of plurality, within a harmonious unity that, traditionally, has not been evident in European theology of West or East.

Together

The contributors to the final section have responded to the three foundations for mission and missiology from 1910 as representatives of their particular church tradition. The scope of the chapters indicates a sense of self in the world in 2010.

Robert Schreiter's chapter on the Roman Catholic Church shows the primacy of theological foundations for the Catholic Church. He makes mention of a recent missional focus upon healing and reconciliation, an act of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰ In a world riven with strife reconciliation has been identified as an important aspect of God's mission. Indeed God's act of loving revelation in Jesus is achieved in order that we might be reconciled to God and have a 'ministry of reconciliation' (2 Cor 5:18-19).¹¹ Schreiter calls for attention to climate change and the need for a new model of mission which centres on the environment. The threat to the flourishing of God's creation on earth posed by the unintended consequences of humanity's activities demands missiological attention. Creation theology has gained renewed attention, feminist theologians have engaged in deep-ecology for some time and ethicists have emphasised the selfishness and greed of human activity, yet a sustained missional response has lagged behind. In the Edinburgh 2010 process the subject was listed among the transversals rather than the study themes despite the fact that the WCC has long focused on creation¹² and that the fifth mark of mission is 'to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the life of the earth.'

Mogens Mogensen speaks as a member of a European national church whose context is a post-Christendom secularism. The scope of his article is limited to Denmark. The Lutheran church which has historically sent out missionaries to the world is, like many similar churches in Europe,

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¹⁰ See also, 'Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation' and 'The Healing Mission of the Church' in *'You are the Light of the World' Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches, 1980-2000* (Geneva: WCC, 2005).

¹¹ Some would like to see a sixth mark of mission that 'relates to peace, conflict transformation and reconciliation to the current list of five' See resolutions of the Anglican Consultative Council, 14. <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/communion/acc/meetings/acc14/resolutions.cfm#s5> accessed 22/12/2011.

¹² See for example, 'Spirit and Mission: Renewing the Earth', *International Review of Mission*, 79.314, 1990 and the WCC Canberra Assembly 1991, 'Giver of Life – Sustain Your Creation'.

attending to local mission amongst those who have departed from church membership. Mindful of the ambiguous legacy of a confident, task-oriented mission, often closely related to powerful forces, Mogensen suggests mission in another key, one of humility and attentiveness to the other. For some this is hesitant, muted mission in a minor key, which lacks confidence in Jesus Christ and ignores the power of the Spirit. For others it is a vehicle for the still, small voice of God when earthquake, wind and fire no longer possess the power to impress or to change. This missional listening happens in conversation with global mission.¹³ Europeans, like Mogensen, with cross-cultural mission experience on other continents are utilising their skills and transposing them to national and local situations.¹⁴ The conversations surrounding Emerging church or Fresh expressions of church often draw on models of incarnation and inculturation that were applied decades ago as mission agencies attempted to adjust their *modus operandi* to one of partnership. Many of the contributors of this volume are attuned to the postmodern and postcolonial discourse or the cultures of postmodernity and postcolony out of which such discourses come and to which they speak. Mission takes place in these contexts; contexts which appear to have more questions than answers, that scrutinise old certainties and unsettle familiar patterns of life. Belief, authority, truth and structures of power are re-examined. Church traditions, Biblical interpretations and doctrine feel fragile. Yet these contexts also give opportunities to learn new insights, to share different perspectives and to listen to voices that were previously silenced or indistinct. Christian mission is therefore carried out in different tones; for some the tone is careful, considered, with a recognition of past mistakes made and so a need to listen and to earn a hearing.

The Lausanne Movement and the Pentecostal Movement discussed in the final two chapters are global networks in which there is overlapping membership and in which fluid, associational comprehensions of mission ebb and flow. The Cape Town Commitment is a significant document, which informs and is informed by many Pentecostals as well. Some may not wish to make a distinction between evangelicals and Pentecostals because of shared commitments to particular Christo-centricism, biblical hermeneutics and individual conversion. The language of love that permeates the Commitment provides an attitude of passion and of gentleness and a reminder that we act in love because God first loved us.

¹³ See for example, Viggo Moretensen and Andreas Østerlund Nielsen (eds), *Walk Humbly with the Lord: Church and Mission Engaging Plurality* (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans, 2010), Tormod Engelsen, Erling Lundebj and Dagfinn Solheim (eds), *The Church Going Global: Mission and Globalisation* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011).

¹⁴ The writings of Lesslie Newbigin provide an example of this approach: see Paul Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin, Missionary Theologian: A Reader* (London, SPCK, 2006).

Rooted in an evangelical interpretation of Scripture and making constant reference to key texts of the Bible, it provides a mandate for missional activity that emphasises a holistic approach¹⁵ in which the importance of service and justice is recognised alongside proclamation. The Evangelical movement, of which Lausanne is an expression, has changed over more than two centuries of existence. Its recent global growth has encouraged a return to a holistic gospel which was present in the social concerns of its early protagonists. Steuernagel and Segura understand the Cape Town Commitment and the Conference out of which it came as a gift that will shape evangelical missiology for decades to come.

One of the most striking mission stories of the twentieth century is the rise of diverse, world-wide Pentecostal movements. Only recently have Pentecostal missiologists been heard. They are intent on bring its strengths to wider attention whilst being willing to critique any excesses.¹⁶ Wonsuk Ma notes the primacy of spiritual experience for Pentecostals and their ability to thrive in places of poverty and social injustice, offering hope and joy to marginalised communities, because their leaders are often drawn from those communities themselves. Pentecostals appear less exercised by postcolonial debates on mission and neo-imperialism: if they belonged to a group of people who had once been silenced and now can speak forth, they wish to do so, claiming confidence, opportunity and divine power, carrying forth the missionary mandate into the new millennium, preaching the word of God in new places, healing the sick and sharing Good News. They have sometimes been accused of spiritualising social problems, of failing to respond to structural evils. Yet Ma's chapter suggests that Pentecostals understand themselves as socialising spiritual problems, of identifying poverty and ill-health as spiritual issues tackled within the church. These varied and complex movements will continue to challenge and inform missiology. Ma considers that a distinct Biblical hermeneutic and a theology of empowerment arising from personal salvation will remain important. He also calls for a greater recognition of theological formation, that helps to avoid theological excesses but does not develop a burdensome institutionalisation.

Future Foundations in Shifting World

The world which we inhabit has been described as 'the crossroads of local struggles and global challenges, of personal subjectivities and communal identities, of human and divine encounters' before which theologians are to

¹⁵ Brian Woolnough and Wonsuk Ma (eds), *Holistic Mission: God's plan for God's People* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010).

¹⁶ Julie Ma and Wonsuk Ma, *Mission in the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010).

‘open themselves to the risks and hopes of a radically planetary love.’¹⁷ In a similar vein – understanding that the glue that holds the various foundations of mission together is divine love which, by animating mission, shows its authenticity – this work is offered both as a risk as well as a hope.

Moving Beyond Monoliths. The essays in this book have demonstrated that no single foundation can function in a singular manner. We need no elaborate discussion here that, whilst the Bible has been foundational for mission, the ways in which the Bible has been a foundation for mission have been complex, contrasting and even conflictual. Similarly theological foundations for mission are as diverse and distinctive as the contextual theologies which have emerged. The ongoing challenge for missiologies in such contexts is to discern differences not merely between Christian communities but within Christian communities. Then it is necessary to decide whether it would be best to affirm these differences or prioritise some approaches above the others and, if the latter, on what criteria should priority be based. Such debates do not take place in a vacuum. Whilst it would be impossible here to innumerate the myriad local contexts across the globe, it might be useful at least to pose questions about global scenarios that may change the contexts of many and influence their missiologies. Since 2008 financial crises have influenced the world – will they have a long term impact on global dynamics? Do they signal an end of consumerist greed, a demise in economic influence and a reduction in political power or simply a relocation of these things from West to East? Will emerging economies take up the same baton or do they do things differently? Will the trends of global trade and communication continue or do the restrictions on visas and therefore on travel suggest that globalising forces (bad and good) are on the wane? Will the significant political changes in the Arab world from 2011 continue and be sustained? If so, what does this mean for the mission of the Christian churches in those lands?

Foundations as Processes. Another area of exploration concerns the complex relationship between missional *formation* and missional *engagement* – the ways and contexts in which people are shaped for mission and the ways and contexts in which they engage in mission (this is not to overlook the fact that missional engagement is also a way of missional formation). Where people’s understandings of mission may be shaped in one context and their missional involvement may take place in a different context, understanding the foundations for mission may involve analysing the interstices or the in-between spaces *between* missional formation and missional engagement and *within* them. Such an ‘intersite-al perspective’ is particularly useful in understanding the experiential

¹⁷ Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner and Mayra Rivera, ‘Introduction’, in Catherine Keller, et al (eds) *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and the Empire* (Missouri: Chalice Press, 2004), 19.

foundations for mission and understanding missional agency, because it helps us understand the dialectics of the relationship between missional formation and missional involvement/agency and discern how the self-perceptions and mission practices of practitioners of mission evolve as they encounter and negotiate with new contexts, partners and opportunities. This approach is particularly fascinating in the context of global immigration and its impact on mission. In the Indian context too there is evidence of Christian Dalit activists whose 'missional formation' took place within the church but whose involvement in mission in a largely secular space has shaped them as agents of mission. The same can be said of several practitioners of mission in religiously pluralistic contexts who are formed for mission within the church but are involved in mission outside the church, often working in inter-faith collaboration. Other interesting cases would include Christians with an anthropocentric missional formation participating in mission involving care for non-human creation. In these cases the dialectics between missional formation and missional agency, and the manner in which agents of mission navigate the journey from missional formation to missional involvement, may prove integral to understanding the foundations for mission. This posture might open up for us a particular perspective of thinking of foundations for mission in terms of a process – a process of negotiating missional formation and missional agency. In a global context where similar processes have a bearing on mission, further attention to other such processes which can be considered as being foundational for mission, can be fruitful in ways not fully envisaged earlier.

Ecclesiological form as mission? The awakening of the western church to the need for new forms of mission has introduced a particular phenomenon which might be of interest for thinking about the future of missions. The emergence of an impetus to develop fresh expressions of church which are mission-shaped¹⁸ has resulted in a phenomenon which opens up the question whether ecclesiology and forms of being church is a new form of mission. This has triggered paradigm shifts in understanding mission today. From understanding mission in relation to the *doing* of the church, mission can now be understood in relation to the *being* and *becoming* of the church, for an incarnational mission. Of course mission as being related to the being and becoming of the people of God is a salient biblical feature, but the institutionalisation of this biblical precedence in recent ecclesial practice opens space in thinking of mission in terms of ecclesial form. Such an ecclesia shaped by and responding to context transcends popular configuration of mission in the language of the imperative – what we ought to do – and frees us to re-configure mission in the language of the indicative – of who we are and are to become. Conceiving of mission in terms of ecclesiological form becomes all the

¹⁸ *Mission Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in Changing Contexts* (2nd ed, London: Church House, 2009).

more pertinent in the context of immigration, racism, casteism, patriarchy and forms of sexism which privilege certain identities over the other within the ecology of the church. An 'other-shaped' church characterised by the economy of radical hospitality – '*philoxenia*' – can stretch and strengthen the embrace of a related missiological concept – the concept of *koinonia* which has been recognised as a mark of mission (by the Anglican Church). In the relations between churches *koinonia* has often been co-opted into a form of patronage which has left the myriad power relations and asymmetries within and between churches intact. *Philoxenia* on the other hand transcends *koinonia*, since it emerges out of a critique of existing power relations and the concomitant transgressions of the boundaries of such power relations. In the present context a church which is re-centred around the 'other' the ones who are different in terms of identity and ability is a form of mission itself. Here the physical aspects of the church like the same communion chalice and burial grounds for all castes, the disabled access, the hearing induction loops, are symbols of the mission-mindedness of the church.

Mission as creation-Shaped. Conceiving mission in terms of ecclesial form should be juxtaposed with a cosmological and creation-shaped mission. Anything which shapes mission is foundational in some sense or the other and therefore it is possible to ask whether creation can be considered a foundation for mission. It already provides a foundation for forms of ethics based on natural law, and offers potential to foster missiological (re)thinking and the evolution of philosophical thinking which acknowledges the epistemological potential of creation or the ability of creation to provide new ways of knowing. A missional model which develops from this will need to comprehend mission *with* (non-human) creation and mission *in* creation proclaimed in the Psalms, in Isaiah and by Jesus himself. We may expect to see a focus on the activity of the Spirit, brooding over the waters (Gen 1:2) and the 'the first born of all creation' (Col 1:15). Creation missiology¹⁹ in a time of climate change also raises questions about salvation and eschatology. It places creation within God's eternal redemptive purposes and explores what new heavens and new earth will mean. A missiology of the environment includes attention to human suffering and seeking after opportunity. In the last decade there has been a great deal of missiological attention on human migration across the globe, highlighting the way in which this is changing the face of world Christianity and the opportunities it affords of mission by migrants and mission to migrants. With climate change already having a deleterious effect on low-lying areas of the world, and particularly the island nations of the Pacific Ocean, migration is increasingly likely to be precipitated by the

¹⁹ For further reflection on this topic see articles in 'Mission and Creation', *International Review of Mission*, 99.2 (2010), 173-307, and articles in 'Mission and the Groaning of Creation', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32.4 (2008), 169- 232.

search for land, not necessarily fertile land or land empty of human habitation, as has always been the case, but land that is above sea level. How might the three Foundations for mission respond to this changing situation? What responses – local and global – will be made?

Conclusion: Sails to Catch the Wind

The three foundations for mission are perpetually relocating in contexts which are in a constant state of flux – as indicated by the plethora of ‘post’ hyphenated understandings of our contexts which have evolved over the years, like post-secular, post-Christian, post-evangelical, post-biblical, post-Christendom and post-colonial. In the introduction we noted the shifts in missiology’s context, attitude, means and content that correspond to new sites of mission in secularity, poverty, religious interface and globalization. In these contexts, mission is founded on bases which are shifting in that they are expected to relocate and respond to different circumstances. A context of such fluidity perhaps stretches beyond its limits the metaphor of foundations, with its reassuring notions of solid stability and immutability. Perhaps our language should reflect the need to have tools for travel or sails to catch the wind. Thus as people migrate across the globe, as poverty, climate change and financial crises create uncertainty and as changing Christian praxis calls us to re-examine the person and work of the Holy Spirit and treasure God’s creation, our missiological language should reflect the need to perceive where God goes ahead of us and to respond in love and grace as witnesses to Christ. ‘The wind blows where it chooses’, says Jesus, ‘So it is with everyone born of the Spirit’ (Jn 3:8). This in no way means doing away with the bases for mission we have identified but rather recognising the need to re-imagine the language of foundations. This would of course entail thinking about how the geo-theological shifts and tremors within Christianity today may be foundational for mission. The Bible, theology and experience help us set our course and trim our sails to catch the wind of the Spirit. Sails help a boat keep on course yet are open to the activity of the winds. This metaphor captures the sense of adventure and of movement, and it widens the spatial dimension in which God’s mission takes place. Our choices may not simply be between rock or sand but also the stormy sea, in which we are with Jesus in the boat with the Spirit filling the sails.

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APPENDIX 1

THEME ONE FOUNDATIONS FOR MISSION

Preface

Study Theme 1 Foundations for Mission brought together in its conveners two research projects: Canon Janice Price of the Church of England led 'Foundations for Mission in the UK and Ireland: A Study of Language, Theology and Praxis', a joint venture of the British and Irish Association for Mission Studies, the (former) Global Mission Network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, and the Global Connections network of Evangelical mission agencies and churches, which examined the altered state of affairs in foundations for mission in Britain and Ireland in 2010. Revd Dr Deenabandhu Manchala leads the Just and Inclusive Communities section of the World Council of Churches which sponsored 'Mission at and from the Margins' an ethnographic study seeking to understand the mission of the church in the South Indian state of Andhra Pradesh in the light of the experiences of Dalit or 'outcaste' communities. Both these projects brought empirical and experiential concerns to the topic and their work was shared at a meeting at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey on 1-4 May 2009 with a wider group which was brought together by Edinburgh 2010, with the support of the World Council of Churches, expressly to draft this chapter.

In addition to the Conveners, ten others from different continents and churches participated in the meeting which was convened by the Edinburgh 2010 Research Coordinator, Dr Kirsteen Kim. Dr Paul Rolph, Research Supervisor, University of Wales, Bangor, UK attended as a consultant to 'Sinking Foundations'. Revd Dr Peniel Jesudas Rufus Rajkumar, Associate Professor of Systematic and Dalit Theology, United Theological College, Bangalore, India attended as a leader of 'Mission at and from the Margins'. Dr Emma Wild-Wood, Lecturer in Mission Studies, Cambridge Theological Federation, UK had also participated in the Towards 2010 project which looked back at the Commission of Edinburgh 1910. Three people were invited for their expertise in biblical studies: Dr Simanga R. Kumalo, Senior Lecturer in Practical Theology, University of Kwazulu Natal, South Africa, who is heavily involved in the contextual bible study being pioneered there; Rev. Dr Néstor O. Míguez, Professor of New Testament Studies, Instituto Universitario ISEDT, Buenos Aires, Argentina; and Revd Jacques Matthey, Director of the World Council of Churches Programme on Unity, Mission and Spirituality, who had also

been deeply involved in 'Mission in the Bible', a project of the Francophone Association for Mission Studies (AFOM). Three others were invited to bring a theological perspective: Dr Edmund Chia, Professor of Doctrinal Theology, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, USA; Dr Christina Manohar, Professor of Theology, Union Biblical Seminary, Pune, India; and Dr Petros Vassiliadis, Professor of Theology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. Dr Beverly Mitchell, an African American and member of the American Baptist Church who is on the faculty at Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, DC, was unable to attend the meeting but commented on the draft document from her expertise in systematic theology.

Having received input from each participant, the May meeting agreed to divide the chapter into experiential, biblical and theological foundations and produced initial drafts of each section. Following the meeting, Dr Rajkumar and Dr Wild-Wood took the drafting work forward, integrating the sections and completing the final draft in consultation by email with the wider group.

1. Introduction

Witnessing to Christ today, the theme of the project to mark the centenary of the Edinburgh World Mission Conference in 1910, implies that our Christian mission relates to Christ's own mission: Such an assertion would have found favour with those gathered in 1910. During the last one hundred years the same point has been restated in different ways. The International Missionary Council's meeting at Tambaram, India, in 1938, entitled 'The World Mission of the Church' declared, 'the essential task of the Church is to be the ambassador for Christ'.¹ In 1958 the same Council, meeting in Ghana, asserted 'The Christian world mission is Christ's not ours.'² In contrast to 1910, when the emphasis was on the *missions* of the churches, the emphasis in 2010 is on *God's mission (missio Dei)* in which Christians participate.³ This represents a move from 'A Church-centred mission to a mission-centred church,'⁴ and towards an exploration of missionary collaboration beyond the church. In 1910 there was frequent mention of the plurality of 'missions'; in 2010 mission is considered to be singular but, as

¹ *The World Mission of the Church: Findings and Recommendations* (London: IMC, 1939), 26-7, quoted in Norman E Thomas, *Classic Texts in Mission & World Christianity*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), 81.

² Excerpt from minutes quoted in Norman E. Thomas, *Classic Texts in Mission and World Christianity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 88.

³ For example, Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006).

⁴ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 370.

the plural ‘foundations’ of this chapter’s title suggests, there are many approaches to understanding and participating in mission: ‘Mission is complex and multiple: witness, proclamation, catechesis, worship, inculturation, inter-faith dialogue. These activities are carried out...in concrete situations...’⁵ In the course of a century many developments have taken place that influence our practice and understanding of mission, not least is the growth of the world Christianity, which is an unanticipated answer to Edinburgh 1910’s prayer for the ‘Christianisation’ of the world. Christians from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific have since critiqued and enriched the mission tradition of the Western nations represented in 1910. Likewise, Edinburgh 1910 was a largely Protestant affair; the Christian unity that delegates prayed for, whilst still partial, means that Catholics, Orthodox and Pentecostals are part of the Edinburgh 2010 project.

This chapter examines shifts in missiological reflections since 1910 and demonstrates the variety of foundations for mission studies recognised today. It groups the foundations into three categories: experiential, biblical and theological, and assumes that, for holistic missional practice, attention to each category is required. Since there is little space for historical explanation, recent developments are emphasised. It is impossible to be exhaustive; however, the contributors to this chapter come from four continents and several Christian traditions and we hope we have provided a representative introduction that will stimulate readers to further reflection and action.

We begin with experiential foundations because it is in recognition of these that the greatest development in mission studies has occurred. The last century has seen a growing awareness that our history, culture, politics, environmental and economic status (often termed ‘context’) influence the way in which we read the Bible, theologise and participate in mission. The relationship of these three foundations is, however, reciprocal, and they can be treated in any order.

2. Experiential Foundations for Mission

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2.1 *Why experience as a foundation for mission?*

Mission does not happen in vacuum. It is grounded in and derives from particular contexts. God’s mission, expressed through the life of the Trinity, revealed through Exodus, Incarnation and Pentecost, takes place in and impacts upon the concrete realities of history. As Jesus Christ took human form and shared our experience, ‘Mission in Christ’s way... cannot but be rooted in a certain context concretely addressing the challenges in

⁵ Peter C. Phan, *In Our Own Tongues* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003), 3.

that specific context'.⁶ Further, if we recognise that *reception* of the gospel is embedded in specific human history and experience, it is logical that experience constitutes a foundation for mission. In accepting experience as one of its foundations, mission has the twin-obligations of *being informed by* experience (both past and present) and *seeking to impact* human experience (spiritual, physical, psychological, social, cultural, political, economic) in creative fidelity to the gospel of Christ.

Mission founded on experience is polyvalent. The practitioners of mission are the ones who make decisions about the shape of their local mission. Recognising experience as a foundation for mission fosters a critical engagement with one not-so-obvious aspect of mission thinking, namely the tendency in mission theology to privilege the so-called theoretical above the empirical. It recognises the need to accord epistemic value to those practitioners of mission who have been denied the privilege of theorizing due to the politics of power, and whose only resources are their experiences. It is upon these resources also that contemporary thinking has to be founded for mission to maintain ethical integrity and accountability. These experiences have to be considered critically and dialectically with theological and biblical sources.

The experiential approach also helps us to discern that the so-called theoretical is located in a particular framework of experience. The granting or denying of epistemic value to a particular experience is related to the question of power. Therefore experience as the foundation for mission brings not only a methodological critique to mission but also a moral one. It helps to interrogate the exclusionary nature of mission practice which neglects 'experience' in general and certain experiences in particular. Further this shift offers a normative direction to suggest alternative modes of reorganising the boundaries of the foundations for mission so as to make them more inclusive.

In contexts where biblical interpretations and mission theology have borne bad fruits in practice, communities are placed in critical tension with the received biblical and theological resources. However, mission founded on experience has a Spirit-enabled 'orthopathic' dimension 'which infuses in the oppressed the strength to rise above the dehumanization of their daily conditions'.⁷ When this consciousness becomes a hermeneutical premise, people are empowered 'to risk questioning and reinterpreting the Scriptures

⁶ World Council of Churches, Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, 'Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today' (2000), §48. Published in Jacques Matthey (ed.), *'You Are the Light of the World': Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), 59-89. Available at www.oikoumene.org.

⁷ Samuel Solivan, *The Spirit, Pathos and Liberation: Toward an Hispanic Pentecostal Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 62.

in the light of their own experiences and insights'.⁸ So experiential foundations for mission also enable a critical retrospection of mission from the perspective of those from the 'underside' of mission history. In discerning its mission the global church has to acknowledge that the history of Christian mission was at one time very much aligned with European colonial expansionism. Attentiveness to the experiences of those affected by this agenda of colonial expansionism has prompted a radical rethinking of mission. It is now being recognised that 'especially where Christianity has been dominant and militant, Christians must now be prepared to listen, to wait and to serve' and that 'Christian stewardship of life through the pursuit of justice, peace and the well-being of creation will win the gospel of Jesus Christ a hearing in ways seldom achieved by sheer proclamation.'⁹

An historical critique of past experience which attempts to discover and understand the events and actors of the past on their own terms is also a valid part of an experiential approach to mission and contributes to healing of memories. For instance, it is frequently acknowledged that the interconnections between the modern missionary movement and colonialism damaged the Christian endeavour by presenting a powerful Christendom model of the religion from a Western world view. In isolation such statements rarely explain the growth of confident and independent Christianities in the global South. To appreciate movements in mission today it is important to hear testimony from Christians in different regions of the world of the experiences of conversion, justification, sanctification and new life, of struggles and persecution, and of the formation of Christian community. These are expressed in the burgeoning Christian literature in many languages and parts of the world today. The foundations for mission are also challenged by exploration of the historical dynamics of power in each situation: the agency of indigenous people in contextualizing Christianity from their earliest engagement with it;¹⁰ the changing relationship between Christianity, culture and politics;¹¹ the different missionary ethos before the age of high imperialism¹² and the

⁸ Solivan, *The Spirit, Pathos and Liberation*, 145.

⁹ 'Hope from Old Sources for a New Century', a consensus paper in Walter Brueggemann (ed.), *Hope for the World: Mission in a Global Context* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 15.

¹⁰ For example, John K Thornton, *The Kongolesse Saint Anthony: Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita and the Antonian Movement, 1684-1706* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), Emma Wild-Wood, 'St Apolo of Europe or What's in a Luganda Name?' *Church History* 77 (2008), 105-127.

¹¹ For example, J.D.Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2000).

¹² For example, Daniel Jayaraj, 'Mission Reports from South India and Their Impact on the Western Mind: The Tranquebar Mission of the Eighteenth Century', in Dana L. Robert (ed.) *Converting Colonialism* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 2008).

entanglements and disentanglements of missions with the colonialist mindset during it,¹³ and the changing face of Christianity and the rise of new Christian movements.¹⁴ This form of historical study is enriched by the empirical research techniques of the social sciences and the nuanced understanding of human societies that they bring. An understanding of the 'qualifiers' of mission experiences throughout history can enable proper participation in God's mission today.

Therefore experience as a foundation for mission brings with it a constructive-critical dimension to Christian mission, which enables Christian mission to learn from the past while engaging with the present and envisioning the future.

2.2 Whose experience?

Making experience a foundation for mission raises questions concerning the 'revelatory' nature of experience that makes it a foundation for mission. Though experience can be understood in a generic sense, not all experience can become a foundation for mission. There is need for 'qualifying' experience. It is at this point that differences emerge: Does one set of experiences take priority over all others? Or does the particular context dictate the experiences that influence mission? For example, many Africans look to cultural roots as being the defining set of experiences when arguing for the inseparability of 'evangelisation and inculturation'.¹⁵ Or cultural, economic and political experiences may be brought together to 'interpret the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the contemporary African in the light of the African condition'.¹⁶ In Latin America the qualifier of experience may be the 'just claim' of those at the margins of the human history, the 'others' of the human story of deprivation, exclusion and oppression with whom Jesus Christ, the Crucified God identifies himself (Matt 25:35-46).¹⁷ Ecofeminists understand that 'the *interdependence of all things* is a constitutive reality of the universe'¹⁸ and develop a creation theology in response to the experience of the degradation of the earth.

¹³ Andrew Porter, *Religion versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

¹⁴ Ogbu Kalu (ed.) *African Christianity: An African Story* (Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 2005)

¹⁵ Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004).

¹⁶ Valentin Dedji, *Reconstruction and Renewal in African Christian Theology* (Nairobi: Acton, 2003), 261.

¹⁷ Consuelo del Prado, 'I Sense God in Another Way', in Elsa Tamez (ed.), *Through Her Eyes: Women's Theology from Latin America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989), 140.

¹⁸ Mary Judith Ress, *Ecofeminism in Latin America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006), 1.

This chapter is informed by the results of two main research projects which will briefly be introduced here. The first, 'Mission at and from the Margins' was an ethnographic study project sponsored by the World Council of Churches seeking to understand the mission of the church in the South Indian state of Andhra Pradesh in the light of Dalit experiences. (Dalits are 'outcaste' communities previously known as 'untouchables'.) The study was carried out through participant observation and unstructured interviews with individuals and focus groups from Vegeswarapuram, a village in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh.

The popular understandings of mission in this context were proclamation (expected to result in numerical church growth) and pastoral care. Simultaneously social justice and resistance to casteism were recognised as God's mission. However, these two aspects of mission were not fully integrated. This is shown by the fact that the Dalit Christian leaders expressed discomfort in using the premises of the church for discussing social justice, especially because of the community's preparedness to take up force as a means of self-defence to resist violence against them.

Regarding the agency for mission it became clear that in the past overseas missionaries with their position of power played the role of primary agents of mission. However as time passed, Dalits became the primary agents of mission and used the *conditions* of mission set up by the missionaries like indiscriminate access to schools, hospitals, hostels and 'holy spaces' like the church, which had symbolic value, to navigate their quest for equality, enhanced self-dignity and social status and further the mission of proclamation and pastoral care. These conditions of mission were seen as a liberative-transformative space by Dalit communities for self-assertion and reclamation of their place in society rather than as components of the colonizing process. Therefore, Dalit entanglements with missionaries are much more complex than patron-client or colonizer-colonized relationships. Dalit communities, which had no stake in local power, viewed those in their own country who had power as 'colonizers'. For them, the conversion experience of which they were the primary agents helped in their quest for freedom from oppression. In this the conditions of mission played and continue to play the role of midwife. Hence proclamation, pastoral care and social justice are all recognised as part of the mission of God. The agency for this mission extends beyond the church.

The second project is a piece of empirical research sponsored by the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland Global Mission Network, Global Connections and the British and Irish Association for Mission Studies. Researchers sought to investigate the contemporary theological understanding, motivation and practice of mission in England, Ireland,

Scotland and Wales. Through a questionnaire, website analysis and interviews they gained insight into the public portrayal, corporate and individual understanding of mission today among national churches and agencies and among clergy from all denominations in one English region.¹⁹ The focus of the data gathering process was a Ratings Scale Questionnaire that was sent to the major denominations and mission agencies. Effectively it requires them to critique their own understandings and practice and in so doing has resulted in the development of a powerful learning tool. Areas such as the reasons for doing mission, the place of people from other cultures, understandings of the Trinity form the basis for sets of questions.

The theological models at the heart of this research are broadly mission as *Missio Dei*, as Proclamation, and as Justice and Liberation.²⁰ In both the local and national research it was found that attitudes to mission reflected an amalgam of all three approaches but did not place great emphasis on *missio Dei*. This is interesting in view of the prevalence of *missio Dei* in contemporary theological treatments of mission foundations. Privileging the experience of the poor in mission was not a popular stance in the survey results from the questionnaire in the UK and Ireland research, except when the questionnaire was completed by missiologists. The response to the question 'The yardstick of mission is concern for the poorest?' resulted in a large number of neutral responses (neither agree nor disagree) and the responses regarding the relationship between mission and justice were the most disagreed with statements. Responses showed some difficulty in thinking about the relationship between mission, justice, development and concern for the poor. It was the responses on proclamation that attracted most agreement, except in perceiving proclamation as acting justly and loving one's neighbours, even though expressing God's love to all carried the highest assent.

These results, therefore, from individuals and agencies in the British Isles portray mission primarily as proclamation. The research highlights a disconnection between those who study and those who practice or support mission in the British Isles and between some contemporary models of mission elsewhere in the world church. In this project 'experience' was understood in the first instance as the empirical process by which data was collected. The analysis of data now raises questions about the way in which the experience of respondents influences their understanding of mission and how conscious they are of their context. Further questions are posed about

¹⁹ John Clark, Martin Lee, Philip Knights, Janice Price, Anne Richards, Paul Rolph, Nigel Rooms (eds), *Foundations for Mission in the UK: A Study of Language, Theology and Praxis* (London: CTBI, 2010).

²⁰ Stephen B. Bevans & Roger P. Schoeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001).

the effects of these comprehensions when listening to other voices in the world context.

A debate over what experiences take priority emerged when comparing these two research projects. All contributors to this chapter agree that the mission of God as understood from the biblical witness includes affirming the sanctity of life, particularly whenever it is threatened, abused or destroyed. It is this that makes mission an ally of those who are struggling for life – the poor, the oppressed and the excluded. But research showed that this was not a priority for all people involved in mission. In both cases mission as proclamation was the primary model and its relationship to questions of justice and poverty was not always clearly articulated.

For those whose understanding of mission involves a strong concern for the poor, according preference to the experiences of the oppressed ('others') when defining 'experience' becomes imperative if mission has to be 'mission in Christ's way' because these experiences constitute important biblical resources for mission theology. This derives from the biblical conviction that 'God also shares in... the marginalization of non-people, and in the pain of the oppressed', which is 'what brings the Third World together as Christian theologians'.²¹ These 'others' are often referred to in the Bible as the 'the poor'. Their experiences can be seen as 'negative contrast experiences' which have special revelatory significance when considered in juxtaposition with biblical witness to God's activity.²² Negative contrast experiences are occasions of God's revelation, which is not so much in the oppressive situation, but in the resistance which brings it to an end and, in so doing, ushers in God's kingdom of peace and justice. In Christian perspective, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ is the ultimate negative contrast experience. It speaks of solidarity with the oppressed as well as the resistance of the oppressed. In the light of the cross, negative experiences are only regarded as contrast experiences if they evoke the critical protest and resistance to the negative situation which we Christians label as sin. In other words, not all human experience is a valid foundation for mission but only that which resonates with the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

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²¹ John Parratt, *An Introduction to Third World Theologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 11-12.

²² See Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Understanding of Faith: Interpretation and Criticism* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1974), 65.

3. Biblical Foundations for Mission

Christian mission is grounded in the Scriptures in their entirety.²³ It is impossible to make a complete theology of mission around one particular passage, because not only do we sometimes find biblical passages pointing in different directions but also because the same narrative can be interpreted differently. The reading of the Bible in different mission contexts has demonstrated, biblical criticism notwithstanding, how the changing contexts of our witness bring about new ways of understanding and engaging in God's mission. We realise that the biblical texts are 'polysemic'²⁴ – that is they contain multiple layers of meaning. The plurality and diversity of our reading of Scriptural texts speak to the plurality and diversity of our human condition, our different histories and cultures, our foreseeable confrontations and the need for wider mutual acceptance and solidarity.²⁵ We will bring some examples of how some key texts for mission have been read at different times before discussing the implications of this for how Christians can read the Bible together in mission today.

²³ There are many valuable general studies on the interface between biblical scholarship and missiology, for example: Donald Senior & Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983); Lucien Legrand, *Mission in the Bible: Unity and Plurality* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990); David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 15-178; William J. Larkin Jr. & Joel F. Williams (eds) *Mission in the New Testament. An Evangelical Approach* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998); Johannes Nissen, *New Testament and Mission, Historical and Hermeneutical Perspectives* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999); Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006); James Chukwuma Okoye, *Israel and the Nations: A Mission Theology of the Old Testament* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006). The Association Francophone Oecuménique de Missiologie AFOM is contributing to the Edinburgh transversal 'Bible and Mission' through Marie-Hélène Robert, Jacques Matthey et Catherine Vialle (eds), *Figures bibliques de la Mission. Exégèse et théologie de la mission, approches catholiques et protestantes* (Paris: Le Cerf, 2010).

²⁴ Polysemy, '...the feature by which our words have more than one meaning when considered outside of their use in a determinate context.' 'Beyond the polysemy of words in a conversation is the polysemy of a text which invites multiple readings.' Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences. Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation* (edited and translated by John B. Thompson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press and Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1981), 44, 108.

²⁵ A general survey of methods of interpretation (or hermeneutics) can be found in: Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 20-47.

3.1 The Samaritan woman: One story, many readings

The New Testament presents to us, as part of Jesus' ministry, not only Jesus' invitation to his disciples to follow him but also the narratives of many other men and women, who as they encountered Jesus, felt that they had become witnesses and announcers of his redeeming presence and love. One such story – of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman (John 4) – has been interpreted differently by diverse authors in different settings.²⁶

Saint Augustine: Augustine reflects on this story in his *Treatise on the Gospel of John* written in the early fifth century. Using an allegorical approach, Augustine makes this passage a prophetic instance of the gentile mission: 'A woman came. She is a symbol of the Church not yet made righteous. Righteousness follows from the conversation. ...a Samaritan woman came to draw water. The Samaritans did not form part of the Jewish people. The fact that she came from a foreign people is part of the symbolic meaning, for she is a symbol of the Church. The Church was to come from the Gentiles. We must then recognize ourselves in her words and in her person... She found faith in Christ, who was using her as a symbol to teach us what was to come.'²⁷

Jean Calvin: According to Calvin, 'When He acknowledges to the woman that He is the Messiah, He unquestionably presents Himself as her Teacher in correspondence with the hope she had conceived... He wanted such an example of His grace to be visible in the case of this poor woman that He might testify to all that He never fails in His duty when we want Him to be our Teacher. There is no danger of His disappointing one of these whom He finds ready to be His disciple.'²⁸ In these words emphasis is laid on the teaching aspect of Jesus.

Modern interpretations adopt different emphases according to different methodologies and perspectives of the interpreting subjects. Some emphasise 'reading the text itself', others reading 'behind the text' (its historical context) or 'in front of' or 'before the text' (reactions provoked by the text).²⁹

A classical doctrinal approach: Many churches use a form of what is presented as a literal approach. Jesus would be seen as the Messiah who

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²⁶ For a transcultural evaluation of different readings of this story: H. de Wit, L. Jonker and D. Schipani (eds) *The Eyes of the Other. Intercultural Reading of the Bible* (Amsterdam: Institute of Mennonite Studies, Vrije Universiteit, 2004).

²⁷ Augustine, *Treatise on John* (*In Johannis Evangelium Tractus*) 15:10, cited in Joel C. Elowsky (ed.), *Ancient Christian Scripture Commentary on the New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), IVa, John 1-10, 146.

²⁸ *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries John 1-10* (Translation by Oliver and Boyd Ltd; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans and Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 102-03.

²⁹ Gerald West, *Contextual Bible Study Methods* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1992), 13. See also Brown, *An Introduction*, 28-29.

comes as a merciful saviour to an adulterous and sinful woman who is unable to understand Jesus' spiritual mission. De facto, classical doctrinal positions predominate in such cases, stressing the symbol of the living water and emphasising the woman's 'conversion'. Most traditional commentaries use this approach.

A reading of the text in its original context attempts to understand the history and religion of Samaritans, the intentions of John's gospel and other occurrences of witness among or by Samaritans in the biblical and early Christian tradition. It highlights how Jesus overcomes the cultural and religious boundaries between Jerusalem and Samaria and the barriers between men and women. It could lead to reflections on relationships between Christian, Jewish and other religious communities as well as on the role of women in Christian communities.

A narrative approach pays attention to the change in the sequence, represented by Jesus' request to the woman to go and fetch her husband,³⁰ at which point two parallel monologues become a dialogue. The question which addressed the real issue for the woman broke the barrier that was building up between the two. Not only had gender and ethnic divisions hindered communication, but so had two languages, that of everyday house duties over against that of the wisdom tradition and allegories. In the narrative approach attention is given to communication issues, the world views reflected in the words of the dialoguing partners, and the point of entry that allowed more profound communication to occur. Mission then is the possibility of establishing contact through overcoming different worldviews.

A cultural reading: In South Africa, where political issues have shifted from racism to ethnicity, the text would clearly be understood with regard to the issue of ethnic conflicts and the way Jesus was able to cross such boundaries. Depending on who is in the group and who is facilitating, the text can be used to encourage the crossing of cultural boundaries, overcoming hatred and violence between ethnic groups, such as Zulus and Xhosas. Mission then would be concerned primarily with intercultural reconciliation and healing.

A feminist approach sees the text affirming Jesus' understanding of the woman's oppression under patriarchy. It uncovers her unfair treatment under patriarchal laws. This reading emphasises Jesus' willingness to break down oppression and act as a liberator who empowers oppressed women. While for many readers the Samaritan woman represents the "sinner" *par excellence*, in a feminist hermeneutical approach she is vindicated for a struggle for equity in gender relations. She is freed from being a victim and

³⁰ Néstor Míguez, 'Reading John 4 in the Interface Between Ordinary and Scholarly Interpretation', in de Wit, *The Eyes of the Other*, 334-47.

regains dignity as one of the first missionaries who calls others to experience the same liberation.³¹

In the latter readings, the story appears as but one example in the New Testament where Jesus carries his mission to those marginalized by society, be it culturally, religiously or socially. Through his engagement with them in their contexts, experiences and narratives, they respond by participating in mission shaped by his example.³² All the approaches referred to have an interface with systematic and contextual theological traditions leading to different emphases in mission. These are not mutually exclusive but represent overlapping plurality of Christian faith and experience worldwide.

3.2 *The Great Commission: One call in four gospel perspectives*

Diversity is not only found among readers and interpreters of biblical texts, but within the biblical tradition itself. In a chapter on foundations for mission, it seems necessary to hint at the significance of some of the texts which in history proved of major motivating importance for mission, including oppressive misinterpretations, such as has been the case with the various versions of the 'Great Commission'. The stories which tell of Christ's resurrection and words of sending show significant differences in emphasis in the final stage in which they have been recorded by the four gospels. For Mark and Matthew, Jesus appeared in Galilee, whereas that event happened in Jerusalem according to Luke and John.³³ Mission is thus described as originating in two different places, a rural one at the periphery of Jewish society, the other at the urban centre.

One can also discern variations in the content of the mandates given by the resurrected to his disciples. In **Matthew**, the commissioning location is a mountain as it is for many major events of Jesus' life, including the temptation story, which presents an alternative vision of mission: that of

³¹ Such readings are numerous, for example: Teresa Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission: A Contextual Study of John 4.1-42* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1988); Vandana, *Waters of Fire* (Bangalore: Asia Trading Corporation, 1989), 76-92; Gail R. O'Day, 'John', in Carol A. Newsom & Sharon H. Ringe (eds), *Women's Bible Commentary* (expanded edition; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 383-85; Mukti Barton, *Scripture as Empowerment for Liberation and Justice: The Experience of Christian and Muslim Women in Bangladesh* (Bristol: University of Bristol, 1999), 107-118. There is evident interface between these approaches to John 4 and the Edinburgh study transversal on 'women and mission'.

³² More critical towards the biblical text is Musa W. Dube, 'Reading for Decolonization (John 4.1-42)', in R.S. Sugirtharajah (ed.), *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* (3rd edition; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006), 297-318.

³³ John 21 also attests to the Galilean tradition which can be read as emphasising unity in diversity and the importance of Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved.

ruling the world in power, a strategy defended by God's enemy. Authentic mission is, however, a long term formation of disciples, with two main characteristics, an ecclesial one and an ethical one. To be disciples involves baptism with a trinitarian formulation, thus linking to a church community. It also implies living according to the teaching contained in the main speeches of Jesus (Matt 28:20).³⁴ These include the Sermon on the Mount, the chapter on forgiveness (18) and the parables in Matthew 25. Matthew's commission carries the double love commandment ('all I have commanded you'). Finally the text requests the formation of communities across ethnic boundaries ('all nations,' not only the House of Israel). The comparison with Matthew 9:13 indicates that the verb translated by 'go' can imply to live differently where one lives. Matthew shows how the one who received all power promises his presence as Emmanuel to disciples living the life-style of the beatitudes.

Mark's gospel has been transmitted with an uncertain ending. The shorter ending (16:1-8) is abrupt and difficult to interpret. The key actors are the women who are committed to tell the disciples and lead them to Galilee, but who cannot overcome their fear at the incredible event. The gospel seems to indicate that, after the resurrection, discipleship must start again at the same place where the journey of following Jesus to the cross started. Mission after Easter remains a life of discipleship on the way to the cross. The longer ending summarises various traditions of early Christianity, focusing on the unbelief of the disciples, then leading to a specific commission (16:15-20). It is the only version of the great commission carrying the technical terminology of 'preaching the gospel' (v. 15) to the widest possible horizon, 'all creation' and referring to major classical charisms and the spiritual healing ministry, 'signs' (vv.17,20). Reaction to evangelism leads to salvation or judgment. The mission command is addressed to the Eleven (only); the signs however will accompany all future believers.

In **Luke** 24:48,49 and **Acts** 1:8, the sent ones are qualified as 'witnesses' with the promise to be empowered by the Spirit. In Luke there is particular emphasis on the capacity given to the disciples to interpret the Torah, prophets and psalms as announcing Christ's death and resurrection. It is a text with particular significance for work on mission and the Bible. It will form the basis for materials for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in

³⁴ David Bosch, 'The Structure of Mission: An Exposition of Matthew 28:16-20, in Wilbert R. Shenk (ed.), *Exploring Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 218-48; Jacques Matthey, 'The Great Commission According to Matthew', *International Review of Mission* 69/274 (April 1980).

2010.³⁵ Luke's is the only gospel which includes a strategic formulation as to the successive geographic development of mission from the first centre in Jerusalem to the ends of the world. The plan of the book of Acts is included in the way Christ's speech is edited. To be witnesses means attesting that the Scriptures foresaw preaching of conversion and forgiveness of sins (*aphesis* in v. 47 reiterating 4:18, with qualification) in Christ's name as result of the Easter events. This sending of the disciples as witnesses replaces the establishment of a political entity for Israel, anticipated on the basis of old biblical hermeneutics (Acts 1:7-8).

John's gospel (John 20:21-23) clearly parallels the sending of the Son with the sending of the disciples within a trinitarian movement, involving the Father and the Spirit. Peculiar to John is the simultaneity of Easter and Pentecost: the Spirit is given as a confirmation of the sending word, as power to forgive (or not forgive) sins. The way the commission is formulated identifies the way the church's mission is to be conceived with the trajectory of the mission of the Son. John's gospel has a further specificity insofar as it carries a blessing for Christians of future generations who will not have had the privilege of direct witness of Christ's resurrection. The quality of the life which is promised is not linked to the specific experience of the first apostles.

3.3 *The calling of Abraham: One story many New Testament interpretations*

The Old Testament is also full of examples of God's calling and sending, of God's blessings through the faith and message, deeds and lives of all the people of Israel and peoples of other nations. Abraham is one of the most prominent witnesses to God's calling and obedient response.

Under the name Abram he receives the calling, the sending, the promise and the blessing (Gen 12:1-4). Using a mission-centred hermeneutic this text becomes a paradigm, for it includes characteristic elements present in many stories of people called to fulfil the different tasks that God's saving love demands. In short, Abram hears God's voice and is sent to the adventure of faith. A promise of abundant life is given; life prolonged through his descendents. There is also a blessing, which reaches to all the families, to all the human family.³⁶ Thus mission is a relational commitment: the engendering of a new family of faith, to be a blessing for

³⁵ The theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2010 is 'You are witnesses of these things' (Luke 24:18), intentionally related to the 2010 Edinburgh celebrations.

³⁶ The translation of the blessing admits more than one interpretation: 'in you all families will be blessed', or 'in you all family will bless themselves'. The second would indicate that blessing reaches other peoples (only) as they relate to the Abrahamic faith.

all. Yet, when we follow the story of Abraham and his descendents we find diversity and even conflict, confrontation and distress as much as faith and endurance, solidarity and hope. The promise, the blessing and the faith are not free from the shortcomings of human life and circumstances.

This paradigm is variously raised in both Testaments. In the Hebrew Scriptures Isaiah 51:2 recalling Abraham's mission, says, 'Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, that I might bless him and multiply him.' The New Testament offers several understandings of that promise. In Matthew 1.1 Abraham is mentioned as the forefather of Jesus. The promise of family and blessing is being fulfilled because that lineage allows for the coming of the Messiah into the world. So, Abraham's and Sarah's mission is accomplished, not only in their life-time, but long after death, for they continue to engender children of the promise, and the benediction extends through new generations.

John the Baptist goes one step further: 'And do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father," for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham' (Matt 3:9). In Luke, written for the Gentiles, we find fourteen references to Abraham. Mary's song recalls God's promise to Abraham (Luke 1:55), as does Zachariah's prophetic outburst at the birth of John (Luke 1:75). Another significant example, related to Jesus' ministry, is the description of Zacchaeus' 'conversion' as his re-entering Abraham's family (Luke 19:9-10). Paul's long argument about the mission to the Gentiles in Galatians 3 is based on a new understanding of the promise to Abraham, an argument further expanded in Romans (Rom 4), where the promise and the blessing is the upholding of Abraham's mission through his 'seed', the Christ. Abraham is an example of faith in the letter to the Hebrews (Heb 11:8-12).

Simply by looking at the Abrahamic references we can see how, even within the Scriptures, the mission mandate is reinterpreted in new contexts. The reinterpretation of Abraham's significance for humanity is not limited to the Bible. Both the Jewish and Islamic hermeneutical traditions provide alternative readings of Abraham's story and of the significance of his descendants, each bearing important impact on mission and interreligious relations in the contemporary world.³⁷

3.4 Mission hermeneutical principles

We have offered examples of how biblical texts concerning mission are given different interpretations in different times and situations. We have also shown how a biblical character or episode is presented in different ways throughout Scripture, giving contrasting understandings. The attempt

³⁷ For attempts by Jews, Christians and Muslims to read the Hebrew Bible together, visit www.scripturalreasoning.org.

to reduce the multiple voices in the Bible to the 'only correct one', to judge the differing interpretations with the standards of our own understanding, has proved to be at the origin of innumerable conflicts among Christians. It has brought about mutual accusations and unhealthy competition, and, as such, has hindered common mission, fostering proselytism and sectarianism. A theology committed to the fullness of the biblical message must allow the richness of the Word to come alive in many ways and settings. The Bible allows for a rich variety of ways to witness to Christ in each context. Some conflicts over mission since 1910 might have been softened had this been seriously taken into account.

Yet, this does not mean that there are no limits. The variety of biblical testimonies and possible interpretations speak with one voice in affirming Jesus as the crucified and resurrected Messiah. The faith in a God who discloses Godself in saving love to human beings and the whole of creation, that communicates God's Spirit creating community, is a call to unity in mission, a unity that wholly depends on God's grace. The limits are given, not by culturally-related interpretations or by the imposition of power, but by our humble recognition of God's freedom to manifest the Good News of salvation revealed through Jesus Christ to all the people, in ways proper to every context. There is no limit to God's grace and justice, except our human understanding and desire to control the liberating message. Every proclamation of this gospel is valid, as long as it bears witness to God's unconditional love shown in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This criterion is crucial in a context of competing interpretive claims.

We cannot reduce the biblical canon to our own internal canon. Different trajectories in the Scriptural texts show the multiplicity and even the tensions within God's revelation. Prophetic and priestly traditions both coexist within the same Bible. Together with many others they relate to a complex approach to human life. They challenge and comfort, moving us by the Spirit who makes everything new and assures us of God's presence in our lives and our world. Any attempt to give a partial account of the biblical narrative causes a distortion of mission. The 'plurality of canons' within the canon speaks of the complementarity of the biblical witness, and results in an ecumenical call to mission.³⁸ There are various emphases in

³⁸ 'Ecumenical' is used here as defined by the WCC Central Committee in 1951: '...everything that relates to the whole task of the whole Church to bring the Gospel to the whole world.' World Council of Churches, *Minutes and Reports of the Fourth Meeting of the Central Committee, Rolle (Switzerland), August 4 – 11, 1951* (Geneva: WCC, 1951), 65. A similar expression is found in § 6 of the 1974 Lausanne Covenant to describe world evangelization: 'World evangelization requires the whole church to take the whole Gospel to the whole world'. The Lausanne Covenant is available at www.lausanne.org

mission, originating in different ways to relate to the biblical text and tradition and to particular situations of the contemporary world. Yet this does not mean that we can avoid taking sides. We cannot be indifferent to the suffering of our world. We need to respond missionally in our contexts.

The Bible inspires us in our response to God's initiative. The inspiration of the Word, notwithstanding the different ways this has been understood in Christian history, is related to the inspiration of the Christian community, receiving from Scriptures guidance and strength for walking the paths of mission. In that sense, the Bible itself is mission, with, besides and beyond the church boundaries. It witnesses to Christ even when we fail to comply with Jesus' invitation to be the continuing presence in his own mission. The Word in the Bible participates in God's redemptive mission.

4. Theological Foundations for Mission

The twentieth century saw the focus of missiology shift from ecclesiology and soteriology (although these remain important) to prioritise trinitarian reflections as being foundational for a proper understanding of and action in mission. Consciously influenced by experience as shaper of theology and aware of the polysemic nature of the theological task, familiar themes in missiology were reworked and we highlight some of them here.

4.1 Trinitarian *missio Dei*

Christ's sending out the apostles to proclaim his gospel is rooted in his being sent by God the Father in the Holy Spirit (John 20:21). This classical formulation of *missio Dei*, affirming that mission is God's sending forth, was expanded in ecumenical discussion in the twentieth century to include the participation of the church in the divine mission.³⁹ This conviction led to a reconsideration of mission as ultimately proceeding from a trinitarian God,⁴⁰ the '...epiphany of God's plan and its fulfilment in the world.'⁴¹ The triune God '...is not a kind of intellectual capstone which can be put on to the top of the arch at the very end; it is... the presupposition without which the preaching of the Gospel... cannot begin'⁴² The way in which the triune God sends forth has been variously understood in recent years. Placed alongside classical hierarchical formulations has been an emphasis on the

³⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 389-93.

⁴⁰ British Council of Churches, *The Forgotten Trinity* (London: The British Council of Churches, 1981-91).

⁴¹ Vatican II, *Ad Gentes* 'Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church' (1965), §9, Available at www.vatican.va.

⁴² Lesslie Newbigin, *The Relevance of Trinitarian Doctrine for Today's Mission* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1963), 84.

relational.⁴³ Community has been emphasised: the triune God is a ‘...dynamic, relational community of persons, whose very nature is to be present and active in the world, calling it and persuading it towards the fullness of relationship that Christian tradition calls salvation’⁴⁴ and equality and justice are modelled on trinitarian relationships.⁴⁵ Other theologians have been wary of comprehending God as simply a model for human relations and demand that Christians *participate* in and practice the relationality of the triune communion.⁴⁶ ‘To engage in the relationships in God means that we are brought up against the challenge of the alien, the radically different the unlike; but [we experience] a fellowship more intimate than anything we can other wise know.’⁴⁷ Whilst there is concern that such close association with the divine is arrogant, many link the participation in God’s mission with an active engagement in the sending movement of the threefold Godhead. The language of mutuality and reciprocity that arises from social and participative models demonstrates a ‘divine livingness’⁴⁸ that enhances our understanding of mission as God’s manifestation – in Christ and the Spirit – of love to whole creation, in which we are called to participate.

Trinitarian reflections have been enriched by different cultural perspectives. For example, Chinese culture provides insights in understanding the dynamic of the Trinity: The Chinese phrase for spirit parallels the Hebrew understanding of spirit, *ruach*, in connecting the outer and inner dimensions of a person together as one. This suggests a narrative theological approach, so that ‘...the conceptual understanding of revelation and the economic Trinity can be “fleshed out” by concrete tangible narrated events in the life, ministry and death of Jesus Christ. The vividness and the power of the story of Jesus can then complement the more reflective conceptual understanding of revelation and the Trinity.’⁴⁹ Likewise, from an Indian perspective, there are correspondences between *ruach* and the

⁴³ Ion Bria, *Go Forth in Peace: Orthodox Perspectives on Mission* (Geneva: WCC 1986), 3.

⁴⁴ Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (2nd edition; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 15.

⁴⁵ Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1988), 236.

⁴⁶ Peniel Jesudason Rufus Rajkumar, ‘Making a Difference Together: Prospects for Ecumenism in the Twenty-first Century’, *The Ecumenical Review*, 60/3 (2008), 239-253.

⁴⁷ Paul Fiddes, *Participation in God* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000), 55.

⁴⁸ Elizabeth A Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 2000), 205.

⁴⁹ Damon So, *Jesus’ Revelation of his Father: A Narrative-Conceptual Study of the Trinity with Special Reference to Karl Barth* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), 22.

Hindu concept of *atman* that signify the Spirit as enlivening and vivifying breath and vital energy of all that lives, linking the action of the Spirit to that of the life-giving creator and the life-restoring liberator.⁵⁰

4.2 Mission in and through Christ and the Spirit

The focus on the relational and communal Trinity, however, has encouraged a fresh understanding of the mutuality and reciprocity between Christ and Spirit, 'the principal agent of mission'⁵¹. From the early church two types of pneumatology developed: the West usually understood the Holy Spirit as the agent of Christ to fulfil the task of mission; the East emphasised the Holy Spirit as the source of Christ and the Church, gathering the people of God in his kingdom and then going forth in mission. The last century has seen an extraordinary rise in Pentecostalism, with its christo-centric orientation and its Spirit practice,⁵² and an engagement with primal religions and a desire to inculturate Christianity by including the realm of the spirits. These experiences have influenced missiology, encouraging reflection upon the inseparable relationship between Christ and the Spirit expressed in different ways such as the 'anointing of the Spirit' and the 'accompaniment of the Spirit,' suggesting that there is no part in Jesus that is not touched by the Holy Spirit.⁵³ Jesus was conscious of God's Spirit working through him. A pneumatological mission theology was expressed in Jesus' inaugural proclamation at Nazareth (Luke 4:8), in which he began, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me'. Christo-praxis is repeated in the actions of blessing, confronting, challenging, dialoguing, leading and renewing the mission of God in the contemporary contexts of different people groups and races. Linking christology and pneumatology avoids exclusive christo-centrism in our understanding of the person and work of Christ, neither neglecting the creative activity of the Spirit in creation, mission and redemption, nor emphasising a false autonomy of the Spirit that displaces Christology and the Trinity.⁵⁴

4.3 Mission ecclesiology

The shift towards a Spirit theology has engendered a missiological understanding of the Christian community (church) and its internal work

⁵⁰ Christina Manohar, *Spirit Christology: An Indian Christian Perspective* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2009), 230-32.

⁵¹ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* 'On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate' (1990), §21. Available at www.vatican.va.

⁵² Wonsuk Ma, 'In Jesus Name... Power Encounter from an Asian Pentecostal Perspective', in *Principalities and Powers: Biblical Reflections in the Asian Context* (Manila: OMF Lit., 2007).

⁵³ Manohar, *Spirit Christology*, 42-43.

⁵⁴ Manohar, *Spirit Christology*, 29.

(liturgy). The mission of the church is seen in her search for a spiritual framework that affirms human life, mutual respect and equality by working towards inner and mutual conversion, just community, survival of God's creation, together with church growth. In the symbiosis of Spirit and Christ the institutional element of the church is complemented by the charismatic element; for if Christ *institutes* the church, it is the Holy Spirit that *constitutes* her.⁵⁵ The Spirit reminds people of Christ's way of mission and challenges the church to be a community that seeks new ways of actualizing Christ's mission.

Since 1910 there has been a focus on ecumenical unity as 'common Christian witness': 'The mission of the church in the power of the Spirit is to call people into communion with God, with one another and with creation. In so doing, many Christians believe, that the church has a responsibility to live out the unity for which Jesus prayed for his people: "that they may all be one... so that the world may believe" (John 17:21) and that his conviction must be proclaimed and witnessed to in the community into which people are invited'.⁵⁶ Thus some churches have formally united, whilst others maintain a 'reconciled diversity.' The present context 'of the rapid growth of "emerging" churches worldwide' has also led to theological attempts to delineate a 'reconstructive and reformatory ecclesiology that recognizes that followers of the way of Christ are multiple, embedded, particular and hospitable' and seeks to 'mark them as faithfully participating in Jesus' way of knowing, acting and being in the world'.⁵⁷ These local forms of church pose new challenges to unity in mission.

An awareness of the liturgical dimension of our Christian self-understanding has developed in postmodernity as a significant element of the Christian witness, '...for the life of the world' (John 6:51). The emphasis of the old mission paradigm on the rational comprehension of truth, and as a result the prioritizing of verbal proclamation in witnessing to Christ, has widened to a more *holistic* understanding of mission in our days, thus adding a more spiritual element to our mission. Prayer is significant – either as the intercessions of Christians which connect God's will and the accomplishment of God's mission, or as silence, understood as a means of accompaniment or resistance. Christians celebrate the Eucharist, not only as a 'thanksgiving', but also as a divine offering (*anaphora*) for the entire creation. The Eucharist is an affirmation of the Church's identity

⁵⁵ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1985), 140.

⁵⁶ World Council of Churches, 'Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today', §66.

⁵⁷ F. Leron Shults, 'Reforming Ecclesiology in Emerging Churches', in *Theology Today*, 65, (2009), 425-438.

as ‘an icon of the eschaton’, a foretaste of the kingdom of God.⁵⁸ The Lord’s Supper, as a remembrance of Christ’s reconciling work, is only constituted where the congregation shares (1 Cor 11:20-21) and an important condition for participating in the Lord’s Table is a conscious act of *reconciliation* with one’s sisters and brothers through the ‘kiss of love’ (Matt 5:23-24).

Mission is an authentic witness to the Church’s eschatological experience (that is, the inclusive reality of God’s kingdom) as the Holy Spirit ‘blows wherever s/he wills’ (John 3:8). The Holy Spirit’s ‘sending’ force lies in the multiplication of the potential witnesses, because the visions and gifts are shared by people of all genders, ages and social categories (cf. Joel 2); and they are brought together in communion by the Spirit. Thus Christian mission is relational more than rational and is not limited to a proselytizing mission, but has become holistic in character; redemption from sin covers all aspects of social, moral, and ecological concerns.

The gifts of the Spirit, in addition to word and sacrament, qualify the wider missionary task of the church. The church does not itself constitute God’s reign but anticipates an eschatological fulfilment of God’s purposes. If the church participates in God’s mission, this is best done when her mission moves out of the corporate Christian life and worship, in what Orthodox Christians call, ‘liturgy after the liturgy’.⁵⁹ Thus for many Christians the life of the church, expressed dynamically in the Eucharist, is the springboard of the churches’ witness to the world. A recognition within ecclesiology that the church is primarily a community of worship, of sacrament and word challenges a secular hierarchical model of church; it reminds us of the priesthood of all believers, who by their baptism are commissioned ‘to proclaim God’s marvellous acts’ to the world (1 Pet 2:10).

4.4 Kingdom and creation

An understanding of mission as God’s activity has led to an expectation of its signs throughout God’s creation and an emphasis on the kingdom of God as distinct from but overlapping with the church. Though some highlight authentic witness of the kingdom which extends their missionary task and responsibility to all kinds of social, economic and ecological activities as mission, such a holistic understanding does not undermine

⁵⁸ Petros Vassiliadis, *Eucharist and Witness: Orthodox Perspectives on the Unity and Mission of the Church* (Brookline, Ma, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 54.

⁵⁹ This term was first coined by former CWME Moderator Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos (‘Orthodoxy and Mission’, *SVSQ* 8 (1964), 139ff), and further developed by Ion Bria in *Liturgy After the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective* (Geneva: WCC, 1996).

those who continue to place emphasis upon evangelization through verbal proclamation as the main task of mission: 'To speak of evangelism means to emphasize the proclamation of God's offer of freedom and reconciliation, together with the invitation to join those who follow Christ and work for the reign of God'⁶⁰. Central to Christ's mission was the idea of '...the coming of a Messiah, who in the 'last days' of history would establish his kingdom (Joel 3:1; Isa 2:2, 59:21; Ezek 36:24, etc.) by calling all the dispersed and afflicted people of God *into one place*, reconciled to God and becoming one body united around him'.⁶¹ Therefore, the apostles, and all believers thereafter, were commissioned to witness to the coming kingdom of God through the proclamation of the good news of the resurrection of the crucified Messiah and his inauguration of a new social, spiritual, and cosmic reality, encouraging loving service, the social struggle for justice, peace and the preservation of God's creation. Mission is thus seen in a variety of activities: building relationships in participation, seeking unity but not uniformity, breaking human-made barriers that are oppressive and life-negating. Amidst the current socio-economic crisis Christians cannot stay aloof, or worse, support the current world economic system that threatens the human and environmental existence, but must peacefully struggle for an alternative system, based on the biblical model of the 'economy of the enough' (2 Cor 8:15; Ex 16:18). This moves us beyond the exclusive church-centred mission (*missio ecclesiae*) and enables us to contextualize theologies and missiologies.

St. Paul expressed the eruption of the kingdom in terms of a *new creation* (2 Cor 5:17). Equally significant, therefore, is another development in contemporary missiology, which sees our mission under a Creator God as safeguarding the integrity of God's creation. A sense that God's mission encompasses the whole cosmos suggests that Christian mission includes all of God's created order.⁶² Indeed, if 'the heavens declare the glory of God (Ps 19)' and the created order bears witness to God's loving kindness then we may participate in God's mission along with creation as well as to creation. This awareness has stemmed both from a growing awareness of the interconnectedness of all life on planet earth and a trinitarian understanding of God who reconciles all creation and eschatologically brings the new creation into communion (Rom 8:18-25)

⁶⁰ World Council of Churches, 'Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today', §62.

⁶¹ World Council of Churches' Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, 'Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation' (2005), §28. Published in Jacques Matthey (ed.), *'You Are the Light of the World': Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), 90-126. Available at www.oikoumene.org.

⁶² Cf. Ken Gnanakan, *God's World, A Theology of the Environment* (London: SPCK, 1999).

5. Conclusion

Recent shifts in missiology, and attention to experience as a foundation for mission, have led to scrutiny of models assumed by missiologists and practitioners.⁶³ To conclude this chapter we present three models of mission that have gained prominence during the last forty years and which draw upon each of the three sets of foundations we have presented. Our explanations are brief; others will point to different models; but we offer them as examples of ways in which the three foundations cohere.

5.1 Mission as liberation

The paradigm of mission as liberation is one of the most dramatic illustrations of the shift in mission thinking and practice. 'Mission as liberation', which derives its impetus from Liberation Theology, attempts to 'reflect on the experience and meaning of the faith based on the commitment to abolish injustice and to build a new society,'⁶⁴ thus enlarging the concept of salvation by understanding Jesus as redeemer from structural evils. Initially arising as a response to systemic inequality in Latin America, it has influenced many across the world to social action and re-reading of Biblical texts for new theological emphases. Christ's baptism and crucifixion are examples of liberative solidarity. Jesus' choice to be baptised instead of to baptise shows Jesus' prophetic identification with the poor. By submitting himself humbly to be baptised, Jesus receives authority and loses identity thus discovering his authentic selfhood as the lamb of God, God's beloved Son, the Messiah.⁶⁵ Jesus began his prophetic mission, defending the poor and confronting *mammon*.⁶⁶ It was this, especially his challenge of the ruling religious elites and colonial powers, which led to Jesus' death. The journey which began at Jordan in humility was to end on Calvary, in humility and shame; both events described by the same word, 'baptism' (Matt 3:13-15; Mark 10:35-40; Luke 12:50).⁶⁷ This baptism is the basis for the church's mission. In exercising its liberative mission the church is guided by the gospel imperative that all will be judged according to whether they fed the hungry, clothed the naked, cared for the sick, or visited the prisoner (Matt 25:15-16). In short, they who inherit God's

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⁶³ See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 181-89; Bevans and Schoeder, *Constants in Context*, 286-347.

⁶⁴ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 174.

⁶⁵ Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 46-48.

⁶⁶ Aloysius Pieris, *God's Reign for God's Poor: A Return to the Jesus Formula* (Kelaniya: Tulana Research Centre, 1999), 57.

⁶⁷ Pieris, *An Asian Theology*, 49.

kingdom are those who give life to others, especially the poor and marginalized.

5.2 Mission as dialogue

In the last decades more and more churches are engaged in inter-faith dialogue as part of their witness. From the 1970s the Orthodox advanced the 'economy of the Holy Spirit' as the theological foundation of a theology of religions.⁶⁸ From 1984 the Roman Catholic Church reflected specifically on the relationship of dialogue and mission, asserting that mission includes 'the dialogue in which Christians meet the followers of other religious traditions in order to walk together toward truth and to work together in projects of common concern.'⁶⁹ Since the advent of the dialogue approach, it has been common within Christian circles to have either mission *or* dialogue – as if engaging in one excludes, or creates problems for, the other. Yet many Christians living in societies where the majority of the people adhere to religions other than Christianity are daily engaged in dialogical forms of mission.⁷⁰ This dialogue is aimed at showing forth the love of God and bearing witness to the virtues of God's kingdom, rather than growing the institutional church. In Knitter's model of mission-as-dialogue conversion remains a goal but it is primarily (although not exclusively) conversion to the service of God's kingdom.

The work of Indian Christian theologians furnishes a pneumatological basis for dialogue which 'recognises the involvement of God through the Spirit in earthly realities'. Therefore mission theology should recognise that 'its starting point can be none other than a particular experience of the Spirit in the world, and that interacts with other contextual theologies.'⁷¹ The result of this approach is a theology of mission as living in the Holy Spirit, rather than accomplishing tasks. Crucial to this theology is the discernment of the Spirit's presence and activity in creation, in contemporary movements, in spiritualities and in individuals by the criterion of the fully human life of Jesus Christ.⁷² God's saving love is revealed in Christ and is active throughout the world by the Holy Spirit.

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⁶⁸ Georges Khodr, 'Christianity in a Pluralistic World – The Economy of the Holy Spirit', *The Ecumenical Review* 23 (1971), 118-128.

⁶⁹ Secretariat for Non-Christians, 'The Attitude of the Church Towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Missions', *AAS* 75 (1984), 816-828.

⁷⁰ Paul F. Knitter, 'Mission and Dialogue', *Missiology: An International Review*, 33 (2005), 199-210; see also *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996).

⁷¹ Kirsteen Kim, *Mission in the Spirit: The Holy Spirit in Indian Christian Theologies*, (New Delhi: ISPCK 2003), 242-3.

⁷² Kim, *Mission in the Spirit*.

Thus dialogue involves seeking to recognise and affirm this presence at work through conversation with others.

5.3 Mission as reconciliation

By his cross and resurrection Jesus Christ brought reconciliation with God and with one another. In a world full of conflict and fractured relationships it is all the more important that the practice of Christian mission should demonstrate a commitment to reconciliation.⁷³ An awareness of reconciliation has grown through the movement for Christian unity, through a model of being-with-others-in-loving communion,⁷⁴ and through the practice of mission as healing, in which Christ's suffering and death '...put an end to the association of the divine with ideals of a perfect, sane, beautiful and un-passionate existence.'⁷⁵ The mission of God as reconciliation calls for transformed relationships in all domains: between humans and God; between humans as individuals, communities and cultures; and between humans and the whole of creation. By 2005 the world mission conference in Athens recognised the global interest in reconciliation and healing within churches and societies which prompted a rethinking of what God is calling us to in mission today. Noting that the reconciliation received in Christ is to be shared in the world, the conference acknowledged reconciliation as a key dimension of mission.⁷⁶

Reconciliation is an integrating metaphor which encompasses and draws together a wide range of ideas which are the elements of the one mission of God. The different biblical terms related to reconciliation, such as sacrificial atonement, shalom, justice and peacemaking, suggest five dimensions of Christian mission which illustrate this integrative power of reconciliation: conversion as reconciliation, international peacemaking, reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, reconciliation between Christians and reconciliation with the whole of creation.⁷⁷

⁷³ Robert Schreiter, 'The Theology of Reconciliation and Peacemaking', in Howard Mellor and Timothy Yates (eds), *Mission, Violence and Reconciliation* (Sheffield: Cliff College, 2004), 11-28.

⁷⁴ See Harry Sawyer, *Creative Evangelism: Towards a New Christian Encounter with Africa* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1968), 72.

⁷⁵ World Council of Churches, Study group on healing, 'The Healing Mission of the Church' (2005), §25. Published in Jacques Matthey (ed.), *'You Are the Light of the World': Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), 127-62. Available at www.oikoumene.org.

⁷⁶ Jacques Matthey (ed.), *'Come, Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile': Report of the World Council of Churches Conference on Mission and Evangelism, Athens, May 2005* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2008).

⁷⁷ Ross Langmead, 'Transformed Relationships: Reconciliation as the Central Model for Mission', *Mission Studies* 25/1 (2008), 5-20.

These three models of mission demonstrate that, despite their individual distinctiveness, the empirical, biblical and theological foundations for mission are complementary and serve to strengthen and deepen a relevant Christian witness in the twenty-first century.



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APPENDIX 2

THEME ONE FOUNDATIONS FOR MISSION¹

The Mission of the Triune God

The central foundation for mission is the nature of the triune God, and how God works in the world. This was the central conclusion of Theme 1, 'Foundations for mission'.

The story of the 'Foundations for mission' study process began in 2007 when the conveners, Canon Janice Price and Revd Dr Deenabandhu Manchala, each began research projects related to this theme. Canon Price, then of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, convened a group of UK and Ireland representatives, and Dr Manchala, of the WCC Just and Inclusive Communities, initiated the research project 'Mission at and from the margins' in India. Against the background of these research projects being progressed and developed, the Edinburgh 2010 study process organisers convened an international group to work on the chapter for the Edinburgh 2010 preparatory volume, *Witnessing to Christ Today*.² This comprised representatives from Argentina, Greece, India, Malaysia, South Africa, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Three areas were identified as the sources of foundations for mission by this group which were experience, the Bible, and theology. The group also outlined three approaches to mission as reconciliation, liberation and justice, and proclamation. This chapter was critical for the preparation for the study theme in the conference itself. Those who attended were asked to study the chapter prior to the conference and issues raised in it were reflected in the conference discussion.

The parallel sessions on Foundations for Mission were attended by over a hundred delegates and representatives from the conference, who joined together to consider the question 'What are our foundations for mission today?' We were led by the co-chairs, the Revd Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick and Revd Dr. Ganoune Diop and they opened the session in prayer and outlined the process. Following contributions from the research studies, the session used small groups to listen to the transversal contributors and to arrive at

¹ Report prepared by the conveners of this study theme: Canon Janice Price, Church of England, and Revd Dr Deenabandhu Manchala, World Council of Churches. The parallel sessions were chaired by Revd Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and Revd Dr. Ganoune Diop, Seventh-day Adventist Church.

² Daryl Balia & Kirsteen Kim (eds), *Edinburgh 2010: Witnessing to Christ Today* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2010), 10-33.

the ten areas they considered were essential Foundations for Mission. These were then gathered together in plenary. The chairs and convenors considered all the material and arrived at the summary statement below.

Mission is the Heartbeat of God

Mission is the heartbeat of God.

God's purpose for the world is to unite all creation under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The foundation for mission is the nature of God – the relational, self-giving, grace-filled nature of the triune God in which we are invited to participate.

The nature of God – and God's mission – is discerned through the work of the Holy Spirit in:

- the experience of a particular Christian community,
- the experiences of overcoming forces that work against God's will of life, justice and peace for all (Matt. 11:3-5),
- the experience of the apostolic community, most perfectly expressed in scripture,
- the experience of the ecumenical community in active dialogue with the cultural context in which mission is lived out, and,
- most importantly, in God's revelation in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which serves as the primary criterion for understanding and evaluating the various elements of mission.

The church, as a sign and symbol of the Kingdom of God, is called to share in God's mission through the transforming power of Jesus Christ and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. We are called to

- witness to the love of God for the salvation of a fallen world,
- incarnate and proclaim the good news of the gospel for life in abundance,
- honour the wonderful diversity of the creation and all people,
- heal and reconcile in the way of Christ,
- love God and neighbour,
- work for liberation and justice in active solidarity with the poor and oppressed, and
- live and celebrate as one family in Christian community in such a way that we are a living demonstration of the love and justice that God intends for all the world.

Foundations for Mission

The statement above is the summary of the discussions of the Foundations for Mission study group, as agreed by the participants. It is in the nature of

foundations that they provide a supportive structure from which a building can stand securely. Jesus' telling of the parable of the house built on the sand (Matt. 7:26) shows that without the appropriate foundations no building can stand securely and withstand stress. A further biblical image is of the cornerstone or capstone which holds a building together. Both the references in Ephesians 2:20 and 1 Peter 2:6 refer to Jesus Christ as the Cornerstone or Capstone. Jesus himself uses the image referring to Psalm 118 when he describes himself as the cornerstone once rejected by the builders (Mark 12:10 and parallels). The key question was 'as we follow God in God's mission in our complex and pluralistic world what are our foundations for mission?'

A key relationship in any understanding of a theology of mission rests upon the emphasis placed on each of the three foundational elements: the *missio Dei* (God's mission), the church and the Kingdom of God. The above statement is rooted firmly in the origin of mission being found in the triune God's mission which is manifested in creation through the Kingdom of God, and of which the church is a sign and foretaste. We want to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit beyond the church, seeing the church as being the vehicle for the Kingdom of God, but not exclusively or restrictively so. In a world which is complex, diverse and pluralistic we need to be sensitive to the action of God the Holy Spirit beyond the church. As well as sign and foretaste, the church is herald of the good news and the carrier of the story of Christ. We also want to proclaim with confidence and hope that the end or eternal purpose of God's mission is to bring all things together in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:10).

One of the most contested aspects of the Foundations for Mission chapter in the conference preparatory volume is the place of experience in the formation of mission theology. Some argued that how we experience God is prior to the formation of doctrine and the language of speaking about God, and is the source of new discernment of God at work by the Holy Spirit. Others argued that theology as articulated by the church is prior to experience of God as individuals or communities. This question remains open but experience in dialogue with Scripture and the tradition of the church can open new insights and practices. Foundations for mission, of which the central foundation is the witness to Jesus Christ in Holy Scripture, provide the framework through which authentic Christian mission is discerned.

The statement acknowledges that the nature of God and mission is discerned through the lived experience of Christian communities as they engage in mission in the world. Mission is contextual, embedded in community and expressed in relationship – as God the Trinity is relational and whose ultimate expression prior to the Second Return of Christ is through the Incarnation. This will be one of the distinctive marks of Christian mission – particular revelation in time and place. The experience of the local Christian community is also found in continuity with the

Apostolic Community which is foundational and authoritative in mission, and which we see and learn from through Holy Scripture. Prior to the Apostolic Community is the witness of Jesus himself, witness to whom we find in the Gospels. The test of authentic mission is to be found in the process of discernment by the local and wider church together, between the needs of particular contexts and the witness of Jesus in the Gospels, between the Apostolic Community and the witness and fruit of the Holy Spirit in his work today. An important part of this process of discernment is the experience of the ecumenical community. The various denominations face similar issues in relating to contemporary cultures and therefore need to listen and learn from each other at all levels of the ecumenical community.

The statement reflects the contributions from selected Edinburgh 2010 transversal topics (healing and reconciliation, youth and mission, and ecological perspectives) and from particular Communion (Pentecostal and Orthodox), who were appointed to give presentations and input into discussions in the course of the study sessions. The transversal topics look to the current challenges in global mission. In a world of conflict, mission is understood as a process of healing and reconciliation between peoples, God and creation. Young people are the future of mission.

The study theme discussions began with presentations from the two convenors on the research projects which they had led in preparation for the conference. In effect these research studies acted like case studies giving the participants a place from which to engage their own experience in discussions on the study theme. Detailed discussion in plenary on the two research projects was not possible due to time restraints but the content was taken into small group discussion which sought to identify foundations for mission.

Rethinking the 'Colonial' Dimension of Mission

Revd Deenabandhu Manchala and Dr. Peniel Rufus Rajkumar described the research project 'Mission At and From the Margins'. This was an ethnographic, historical and theological study of the features of the mission of churches on the margins, with reference to the marginalised yet resilient Dalit³ communities of India. The research was sponsored by the Just and Inclusive Communities Programme of the WCC and conducted by the Collective of Dalit Ecumenical Christian Scholars (CODECS).⁴

The field study for the study project was undertaken at a village called Vegeswarapuram in the South Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. The primary

³ 'Dalit' is the self-designation of the people of India formally known as 'outcaste' or 'untouchable'.

⁴ The full results of this project will be published as Joseph Prabhakar Dayam, Peniel Jesudason Rufus Rajkumar & I.P. Asheervadam (eds.), *Mission at and from the Margins* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, forthcoming in 2011).

purpose of the project was to recover the Dalit agency and agenda in Christian missions in Andhra Pradesh and draw the implications of this agency for the ecumenical imagination of the church's mission in the world today.

A presupposition of this research is that not all experience is foundational for mission. However the experiences of those at the margins were privileged as being foundational for mission theology in the context of this study project. To that extent, the study appeals to the biblical language of the rejected stone becoming the cornerstone. It resonates with the biblical subversion of rejection by making the rejected ones and their experiences the cornerstone of mission theology. It is hoped that from striking these 'rocks' or stones, fresh life-giving waters will spring forth which will rejuvenate mission theology today.

The orientation of the study is such that it questions the tendency in mission theology to think of mission in relation to marginalised communities as 'mission to' and opens space to think of mission in terms of 'mission at' and 'mission from'.

A key theme was '*Mission reforming the margins or margins reforming mission?*' One of the dominant notions that exists of the mission carried out by missionary organisations is that they transformed the margins. However, in our conclusions it was the Dalits who embraced the conditions and media of mission set up by the missionaries (access to education, health care, and employment) as avenues of renegotiating their social and economic status and for breaking away from the constraints of the caste system. It was the Dalit communities which humanised missions and gave them a humane face. They were the primary agenda-setters in 'converting mission' into concern for the marginalised.

By recovering the agency of the Dalits in reforming mission (and making mission an avenue for challenging the prevailing 'body politic') the study provided a new hermeneutical tool to interrogate the popular accusations about the 'colonial' dimension of mission. It also helped us to understand the importance of adopting a nuanced approach towards understanding the interplay between colonialism and the Dalit communities. Dalit relationships with missionaries are much more complex than patron-client or coloniser-colonised relationships. Dalit communities, which have no stakes in local power, viewed those in their own country who had power as 'colonisers'. In this context the conditions created by mission were seen as a liberative-transformative space by Dalit communities for self-assertion and reclamation of their place in society, rather than as components of the colonising process.

One fundamental shift in perspective which emerged during the course of the study was to understand mission as creating *conditions* that facilitated the empowerment of people at the margins. A few specific illustrations drawn from the field study can clarify mission as '*the creation of conditions*' that facilitated empowerment and emancipation, and provide

us with glimpses of the various patterns of mission which emerge from the margins.

The project drew two further conclusions. First, that mission is an *alliance*. Communities on the margins found in the establishment of the mission station, and in the missionary (the *Dora*), an advocate of their rights and used it as a springboard to further their own attempts for emancipation from the caste system. They saw in the *Dora* a possible ally because of the access that the missionaries had to the colonial administration. This colonial connection, coupled with missionary establishments like hospitals, schools and hostels, prompted the Dalit communities to shift their allegiance from their traditional landlords to these new *Doras*.

Second, there is a link between mission and *educational transformation*. Much of the transformative effect of Christian mission can be traced to the way the Dalits appropriated the educational ministry of the Christian missions. Appropriating the access to education was – for the Dalit communities, who were denied education under the caste system – a strategic intervention which fostered the empowerment of the Dalit communities.

Mission here can be understood as involving a midwifery role – a role which involves both *creating* those conditions which give birth to new realities as well as *eliminating* the various impediments which impose constraints on the flourishing of the communities on the margins. Understanding mission as having a midwifery role in a pluralistic context like India has significant implications because primarily mission does not become the monopoly of ecclesiastical Christianity. Mission transcends being an enterprise which can solely be in the service of the church. Rather, understanding mission as creating the conditions for liberation helps us to understand mission as a process, which offers itself to further the liberative agendas of other organisations, groups and bodies which may have their base outside the church but yet are involved in the issues of justice. It becomes a catalyst in forging alliances. Mission may be understood as hospitality – where the fruits of missional activity are offered to other partners in the service of their agendas in so far as they serve liberative purposes, and where other groups and forces are invited to partake in what has been achieved and give it further shape and direction.

Language, Theology and Praxis

The second piece of research which was presented was conducted among the churches and agencies of the United Kingdom and Ireland. It was devised by an ecumenical group comprising representatives of the ecumenical body Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, the evangelical Global Connections and the British and Irish Association of Mission

Studies.⁵ The question governing the research was ‘what are the theological understandings and practice of mission among the churches and agencies of the UK and Ireland at the beginning of the twenty-first century?’ In other words, the hypothesis for the research was that *what is said publicly about the theology of mission by UK and Ireland churches, agencies and institutions does not necessarily match up with the mission practice, understanding and outworking of those same bodies*. To test this hypothesis a three-stage approach involved a search of selected websites of the churches and agencies, a questionnaire distributed to churches and agencies at national and local level and in-depth interviews. The questionnaire rated people’s responses to different statements about mission. It attracted a response rate of sixty-eight responses from the national survey of churches and mission agencies and ninety-three from the local survey in one region of England.

The conclusions of the research can be summarised as follows in the three categories of analysis: language, theology and praxis.

There was an openness to relational language with a high level of agreement on questions that concerned reconciliation and transformation. There was also a rejection of language that separated and seemed to harden attitudes such as ‘confronting’ or ‘condemnation’. There was a high level of assent to the word ‘mission’ which was seen as positive but it was also likely that disagreement with the word mission was difficult given its high profile in current discourse. A significant number of respondents struggled with naming priorities in mission. This was particularly the case where the words ‘primarily’ ‘most’ and ‘better’ were used in the question which discouraged a general answer. Respondents struggled with these words largely because of a desire to embrace different concepts rather than prioritise. The survey showed some struggle with how and where mission happens. Questions relating to relationships with other faiths, who is best equipped to carry out mission and whether God works primarily through Christians all showed a high neutrality in the responses. The greatest divisions appeared with regard to mission and social justice. For some respondents mission and social justice are synonymous but for others social justice or social action is a means to mission which is seen as proclamation.

From the three models of mission adopted on the survey – proclamation, liberation and justice and *missio Dei*, it was found that proclamation was the most commonly described as the driver for mission in the local survey. The national survey was more concerned with integrating all three models. *Missio Dei* was found to be a weak driver for mission. Despite the prevalence of the language of *missio Dei* it was not found to be a prominent driver of mission in the interview stage. Matthew 28:18-20, the ‘Great

⁵ The full report is published as Anne Richards *et al.*, *Foundations for Mission: A Study of Language, Theology and Praxis from the UK and Ireland* (London: SCM-Canterbury, 2010).

Commission', appeared to be the primary biblical driver for the local survey and interviews and this verse was also used in website texts. There was a tension in many answers between what mission ought to be and what it is in practice. Whatever the concepts or models in use, for many mission could not be separated from the reality of practice where mission was practical and embedded in everyday life.

There is an inconsistency between what is said and done which arises from the observation that mission does not exist as a concept but as embedded praxis. Respondents more often started describing mission from practice and then moved to theory. There is a need to root mission in experience and story. Websites do not demonstrate praxis but aim to be inspirational. Tensions between leadership and congregations were found in how mission is expressed at local level. Clergy often stressed that their views were not necessarily at the same place as their congregations. Tensions in national leadership were found in that some denominational mission departments were unable to complete the survey as a team because of sharp divergences in approach. Mission is varied and diverse. Holistic mission was found to be a helpful concept as it described mission across a spectrum that combined all three elements of proclamation, social justice and *missio Dei* among others.

Mission is not a neat concept. Christian mission today is a varied and diverse set of understandings and activities depending on context and discernment of God's work through the Holy Spirit and history. Discerning foundations for mission requires listening to the voice of God amidst the clamour for life and justice, to the church and to particular contexts using the tools of Scripture, and to spirituality and sources of the Christian tradition. It is a journey that the church makes together that holds many challenges as well as energising the very life of the church. At the heart of all this stands the triune God as the foundation and source of mission. God's activities are varied but his relational, self-giving, grace-filled nature is constant and defines our participation in what God is doing in the world.

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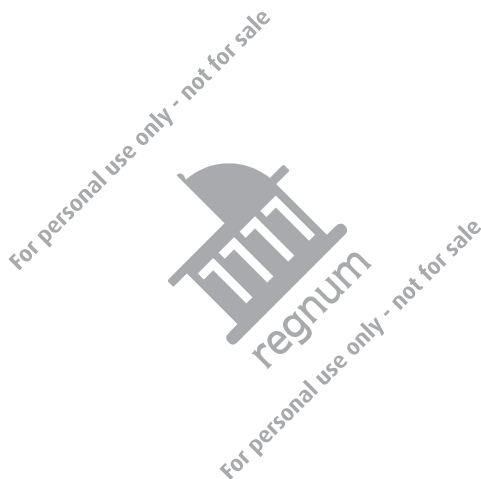
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In May 2009, 35 theologians from Asia, Africa and Europe met in Wuppertal, Germany, for a consultation on mission theology organized by the United Evangelical Mission: Communion of 35 Churches in Three Continents. The aim was to participate in the 100th anniversary of the Edinburgh conference through a study process and reflect on the challenges for mission in the 21st century. This book brings together these papers written by experienced practitioners from around the world.

Brian Woolnough and Wonsuk Ma (Eds)

Holistic Mission

God's Plan for God's People

2010 / 978-1-870345-85-9 / 277pp

Holistic mission, or integral mission, implies God is concerned with the whole person, the whole community, body, mind and spirit. This book discusses the meaning of the holistic gospel, how it has developed, and implications for the church. It takes a global, eclectic approach, with 19 writers, all of whom have

much experience in, and commitment to, holistic mission. It addresses critically and honestly one of the most exciting, and challenging, issues facing the church today. To be part of God's plan for God's people, the church must take holistic mission to the world.

Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (Eds)

Mission Today and Tomorrow

2010 / 978-1-870345-91-0 / 450pp

There are moments in our lives when we come to realise that we are participating in the triune God's mission. If we believe the church to be as sign and symbol of the reign of God in the world, then we are called to witness to Christ today by sharing in God's mission of love through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. We can all participate in God's transforming and reconciling mission of love to the whole creation.

Tormod Engelsen, Erling Lundeby and Dagfinn Solheim (Eds)

The Church Going Global

Mission and Globalisation

2011 / 978-1-870345-93-4 / 262pp

The New Testament church is... universal and local at the same time. The universal, one and holy apostolic church appears in local manifestations. Missiologically speaking... the church can take courage as she faces the increasing impact of globalisation on local communities today. Being universal and concrete, the church is geared for the simultaneous challenges of the global and local.

Marina Ngurusangzeli Behera (Ed)

Interfaith Relations after One Hundred Years

Christian Mission among Other Faiths

2011 / 978-1-870345-96-5 / 334pp

The essays of this book reflect not only the acceptance and celebration of pluralism within India but also by extension an acceptance as well as a need for unity among Indian Christians of different denominations. The essays were presented and studied at a preparatory consultation on Study Theme II: Christian Mission Among Other Faiths at the United Theological College, India July 2009.

Lalsangkima Pachuau and Knud Jørgensen (Eds)

Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic Age

Christian Mission among Other Faiths

2011 / 978-1-870345-95-8 / 277pp

In a world where plurality of faiths is increasingly becoming a norm of life, insights on the theology of religious plurality are needed to strengthen our understanding of our own faith and the faith of others. Even though religious diversity is not new, we are seeing an upsurge in interest on the theologies of religion among all Christian confessional traditions. It can be claimed that no other issue in Christian mission is more important and more difficult than the theologies of religions.

Beth Snodderly and A Scott Moreau (Eds)

Evangelical Frontier Mission

Perspectives on the Global Progress of the Gospel

2011 / 978-1-870345-98-9 / 312pp

This important volume demonstrates that 100 years after the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Evangelism has become truly global. Twenty-first-century Evangelism continues to focus on frontier mission, but significantly, and in the spirit of Edinburgh 1910, it also has re-engaged social action.

Rolv Olsen (Ed)

Mission and Postmodernities

2011 / 978-1-870345-97-2 / 279pp

This volume takes on meaning because its authors honestly struggle with and debate how we should relate to postmodernities. Should our response be accommodation, relativizing or counter-culture? How do we strike a balance between listening and understanding, and at the same time exploring how postmodernities influence the interpretation and application of the Bible as the normative story of God's mission in the world?

Cathy Ross (Ed)

Life-Widening Mission

2012 / 978-1-908355-00-3 / 190pp

It is clear from the essays collected here that the experience of the 2010 World Mission Conference in Edinburgh was both affirming and frustrating for those taking part - affirming because of its recognition of how the centre of gravity has moved in global Christianity; frustrating because of the relative slowness of so many global Christian bodies to catch up with this and to embody it in the way they do business and in the way they represent themselves. These reflections will—or should—provide plenty of food for thought in the various councils of the Communion in the coming years.

Beate Fagerli, Knud Jørgensen, Rolv Olsen, Kari Storstein Haug and

Knut Tveitereid (Eds)

A Learning Missional Church

Reflections from Young Missiologists

2012 / 978-1-908355-01-1 / 239pp

Cross-cultural mission has always been a primary learning experience for the church. It pulls us out of a mono-cultural understanding and helps us discover a legitimate theological pluralism which opens up for new perspectives in the Gospel. Translating the Gospel into new languages and cultures is a human and divine means of making us learn new 'incarnations' of the Good News.

REGNUM STUDIES IN GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY

(Previously GLOBAL THEOLOGICAL VOICES series)

Series Listing

David Emmanuel Singh (Ed)

Jesus and the Cross

Reflections of Christians from Islamic Contexts

2008 / 978-1-870345-65-1 / 226pp

The Cross reminds us that the sins of the world are not borne through the exercise of power but through Jesus Christ's submission to the will of the Father. The papers in this volume are organised in three parts: scriptural, contextual and theological. The central question being addressed is: how do Christians living in contexts, where Islam is a majority or minority religion, experience, express or think of the Cross?

Sung-wook Hong

Naming God in Korea

The Case of Protestant Christianity

2008 / 978-1-870345-66-8 / 170pp

Since Christianity was introduced to Korea more than a century ago, one of the most controversial issues has been the Korean term for the Christian 'God'. This issue is not merely about naming the Christian God in Korean language, but it relates to the question of theological contextualization - the relationship between the gospel and culture - and the question of Korean Christian identity. This book demonstrates the nature of the gospel in relation to cultures, i.e., the universality of the gospel expressed in all human cultures.

Hubert van Beek (Ed)

Revisioning Christian Unity

The Global Christian Forum

2009 / 978-1-870345-74-3 / 288pp

This book contains the records of the Global Christian Forum gathering held in Limuru near Nairobi, Kenya, on 6 – 9 November 2007 as well as the papers presented at that historic event. Also included are a summary of the Global Christian Forum process from its inception until the 2007 gathering and the reports of the evaluation of the process that was carried out in 2008.

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Young-hoon Lee

The Holy Spirit Movement in Korea

Its Historical and Theological Development

2009 / 978-1-870345-67-5 / 174pp

This book traces the historical and theological development of the Holy Spirit Movement in Korea through six successive periods (from 1900 to the present time). These periods are characterized by repentance and revival (1900-20), persecution and suffering under Japanese occupation (1920-40), confusion and division (1940-60), explosive revival in which the Pentecostal movement played a major role in the rapid growth of Korean churches (1960-80), the movement

reaching out to all denominations (1980-2000), and the new context demanding the Holy Spirit movement to open new horizons in its mission engagement (2000-).

Paul Hang-Sik Cho
Eschatology and Ecology
Experiences of the Korean Church
2010 / 978-1-870345-75-0 / 260pp

This book raises the question of why Korean people, and Korean Protestant Christians in particular, pay so little attention to ecological issues. The author argues that there is an important connection (or elective affinity) between this lack of attention and the other-worldly eschatology that is so dominant within Korean Protestant Christianity.

Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, Namsoon Kang, Joshva Raja (Eds)
The Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity
Theological Perspectives, Ecumenical Trends, Regional Surveys
2010 / 978-1-870345-80-4 / 759pp

This major reference work is the first ever comprehensive study of Theological Education in Christianity of its kind. With contributions from over 90 international scholars and church leaders, it aims to be easily accessible across denominational, cultural, educational, and geographic boundaries. The Handbook will aid international dialogue and networking among theological educators, institutions, and agencies.

David Emmanuel Singh & Bernard C Farr (Eds)
Christianity and Education
Shaping of Christian Context in Thinking
2010 / 978-1-870345-81-1 / 374pp

Christianity and Education is a collection of papers published in *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* over a period of 15 years. The articles represent a spectrum of Christian thinking addressing issues of institutional development for theological education, theological studies in the context of global mission, contextually aware/informed education, and academies which deliver such education, methodologies and personal reflections.

David Emmanuel Singh (Ed)
Jesus and the Incarnation
Reflections of Christians from Islamic Contexts
2011 / 978-1-870345-90-3 / 250pp

In the dialogues of Christians with Muslims nothing is more fundamental than the Cross, the Incarnation and the Resurrection of Jesus. Building on the *Jesus and the Cross*, this book contains voices of Christians living in various 'Islamic contexts' and reflecting on the Incarnation of Jesus. The aim and hope of these reflections is that the papers weaved around the notion of 'the Word' will not only promote dialogue among Christians on the roles of the Person and the Book but, also, create a positive environment for their conversations with Muslim neighbours.

J. Andrew Kirk
Civilisations in Conflict?
Islam, the West and Christian Faith
2011 / 978-1-870345-87-3 / 205pp

Samuel Huntington's thesis, which argues that there appear to be aspects of Islam that could be on a collision course with the politics and values of Western societies, has provoked much controversy. The purpose of this study is to offer a particular response to Huntington's thesis by making a comparison between the origins of Islam and Christianity.

Ivan M Satyavrata
God Has Not left Himself Without Witness
2011 / 978-1-870345-79-8 / 260pp

Since its earliest inception the Christian Church has had to address the question of what common ground exists between Christian faiths and other religions. This issue is not merely of academic interest but one with critical existential and socio-political consequences. This study presents a case for the revitalization of the fulfillment tradition based on a recovery and assessment of the fulfillment approaches of Indian Christian converts in the pre-independence period.

REGNUM STUDIES IN MISSION
Series Listing

Kwame Bediako
Theology and Identity
The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa
1992 / 978-1870345-10-1 / 508pp

The author examines the question of Christian identity in the context of the Graeco-Roman culture of the early Roman Empire. He then addresses the modern African predicament of quests for identity and integration.

Christopher Sugden
Seeking the Asian Face of Jesus
*The Practice and Theology of Christian Social Witness
in Indonesia and India 1974-1996*
1997 / 1-870345-26-6 / 496pp

This study focuses on contemporary holistic mission with the poor in India and Indonesia combined with the call to transformation of all life in Christ with micro-credit enterprise schemes. 'The literature on contextual theology now has a new standard to rise to' – Lamin Sanneh (Yale University, USA).

Hwa Yung

Mangoes or Bananas?

The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology

1997 / 1-870345-25-5 / 274pp

Asian Christian thought remains largely captive to Greek dualism and Enlightenment rationalism because of the overwhelming dominance of Western culture. Authentic contextual Christian theologies will emerge within Asian Christianity with a dual recovery of confidence in culture and the gospel.

Keith E. Eitel

Paradigm Wars

The Southern Baptist International Mission Board Faces the Third Millennium

1999 / 1-870345-12-6 / 140pp

The International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention is the largest denominational mission agency in North America. This volume chronicles the historic and contemporary forces that led to the IMB's recent extensive reorganization, providing the most comprehensive case study to date of a historic mission agency restructuring to continue its mission purpose into the twenty-first century more effectively.

Samuel Jayakumar

Dalit Consciousness and Christian Conversion

Historical Resources for a Contemporary Debate

1999 / 81-7214-497-0 / 434pp

(Published jointly with ISPCK)

The main focus of this historical study is social change and transformation among the Dalit Christian communities in India. Historiography tests the evidence in the light of the conclusions of the modern Dalit liberation theologians.

Vinay Samuel and Christopher Sugden (Eds)

Mission as Transformation

A Theology of the Whole Gospel

1999 / 978-18703455-13-2 / 522pp

This book brings together in one volume twenty five years of biblical reflection on mission practice with the poor from around the world. This volume helps anyone understand how evangelicals, struggling to unite evangelism and social action, found their way in the last twenty five years to the biblical view of mission in which God calls all human beings to love God and their neighbour; never creating a separation between the two.

Christopher Sugden
Gospel, Culture and Transformation
2000 / 1-870345-32-0 / 152pp

*A Reprint, with a New Introduction,
of Part Two of Seeking the Asian Face of Jesus*

Gospel, Culture and Transformation explores the practice of mission especially in relation to transforming cultures and communities. - 'Transformation is to enable God's vision of society to be actualised in all relationships: social, economic and spiritual, so that God's will may be reflected in human society and his love experienced by all communities, especially the poor.'

Bernhard Ott
Beyond Fragmentation: Integrating Mission and Theological Education
*A Critical Assessment of some Recent Developments
in Evangelical Theological Education*

2001 / 1-870345-14-2 / 382pp

Beyond Fragmentation is an enquiry into the development of Mission Studies in evangelical theological education in Germany and German-speaking Switzerland between 1960 and 1995. The author undertakes a detailed examination of the paradigm shifts which have taken place in recent years in both the theology of mission and the understanding of theological education.

Gideon Githiga
The Church as the Bulwark against Authoritarianism

*Development of Church and State Relations in Kenya, with Particular Reference
to the Years after Political Independence 1963-1992*

2002 / 1-870345-38-x / 218pp

'All who care for love, peace and unity in Kenyan society will want to read this careful history by Bishop Githiga of how Kenyan Christians, drawing on the Bible, have sought to share the love of God, bring his peace and build up the unity of the nation, often in the face of great difficulties and opposition.' Canon Dr Chris Sugden, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies.

Myung Sung-Hoon, Hong Young-Gi (eds.)
Charis and Charisma

David Yonggi Cho and the Growth of Yoido Full Gospel Church
2003 / 978-1870345-45-3 / 218pp

This book discusses the factors responsible for the growth of the world's largest church. It expounds the role of the Holy Spirit, the leadership, prayer, preaching, cell groups and creativity in promoting church growth. It focuses on God's grace (charis) and inspiring leadership (charisma) as the two essential factors and the book's purpose is to present a model for church growth worldwide.

Samuel Jayakumar

Mission Reader

Historical Models for Wholistic Mission in the Indian Context

2003 / 1-870345-42-8 / 250pp

(Published jointly with ISPCK)

This book is written from an evangelical point of view revalidating and reaffirming the Christian commitment to wholistic mission. The roots of the 'wholistic mission' combining 'evangelism and social concerns' are to be located in the history and tradition of Christian evangelism in the past; and the civilizing purpose of evangelism is compatible with modernity as an instrument in nation building.

Bob Robinson

Christians Meeting Hindus

An Analysis and Theological Critique of the Hindu-Christian Encounter in India

2004 / 987-1870345-39-2 / 392pp

This book focuses on the Hindu-Christian encounter, especially the intentional meeting called dialogue, mainly during the last four decades of the twentieth century, and specifically in India itself.

Gene Early

Leadership Expectations

How Executive Expectations are Created and Used in a Non-Profit Setting

2005 / 1-870345-30-4 / 276pp

The author creates an Expectation Enactment Analysis to study the role of the Chancellor of the University of the Nations-Kona, Hawaii. This study is grounded in the field of managerial work, jobs and behaviour and draws on symbolic interactionism, role theory, role identity theory and enactment theory. The result is a conceptual framework for developing an understanding of managerial roles.

Tharcisse Gatwa

The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises 1900-1994

2005 / 978-1870345-24-8 / 300pp

(Reprinted 2011)

Since the early years of the twentieth century Christianity has become a new factor in Rwandan society. This book investigates the role Christian churches played in the formulation and development of the racial ideology that culminated in the 1994 genocide.

Julie Ma

Mission Possible

Biblical Strategies for Reaching the Lost

2005 / 978-1870345-37-1 / 142pp

This is a missiology book for the church which liberates missiology from the specialists for the benefit of every believer. It also serves as a textbook that is

simple and friendly, and yet solid in biblical interpretation. This book links the biblical teaching to the actual and contemporary missiological settings with examples, making the Bible come alive to the reader.

Allan Anderson, Edmond Tang (Eds)

Asian and Pentecostal

The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia

2005 / 978-1870345-94-1 / 596pp

(Reprinted 2011)

(Published jointly with APTS Press)

This book provides a thematic discussion and pioneering case studies on the history and development of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in the countries of South Asia, South East Asia and East Asia.

I. Mark Beaumont

Christology in Dialogue with Muslims

*A Critical Analysis of Christian Presentations of Christ for Muslims
from the Ninth and Twentieth Centuries*

2005 / 978-1870345-46-0 / 228pp

This book analyses Christian presentations of Christ for Muslims in the most creative periods of Christian-Muslim dialogue, the first half of the ninth century and the second half of the twentieth century. In these two periods, Christians made serious attempts to present their faith in Christ in terms that take into account Muslim perceptions of him, with a view to bridging the gap between Muslim and Christian convictions.

Thomas Czövek,

Three Seasons of Charismatic Leadership

*A Literary-Critical and Theological Interpretation of the Narrative of
Saul, David and Solomon*

2006 / 978-1870345-48-4 / 272pp

This book investigates the charismatic leadership of Saul, David and Solomon. It suggests that charismatic leaders emerge in crisis situations in order to resolve the crisis by the charisma granted by God. Czövek argues that Saul proved himself as a charismatic leader as long as he acted resolutely and independently from his mentor Samuel. In the author's eyes, Saul's failure to establish himself as a charismatic leader is caused by his inability to step out from Samuel's shadow.

Richard Burgess

Nigeria's Christian Revolution

The Civil War Revival and Its Pentecostal Progeny (1967-2006)

2008 / 978-1-870345-63-7 / 347pp

This book describes the revival that occurred among the Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria and the new Pentecostal churches it generated, and documents the changes that have occurred as the movement has responded to global flows and local

demands. As such, it explores the nature of revivalist and Pentecostal experience, but does so against the backdrop of local socio-political and economic developments, such as decolonisation and civil war, as well as broader processes, such as modernisation and globalisation.

David Emmanuel Singh & Bernard C Farr (Eds)

Christianity and Cultures

Shaping Christian Thinking in Context

2008 / 978-1-870345-69-9 / 260pp

This volume marks an important milestone, the 25th anniversary of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS). The papers here have been exclusively sourced from Transformation, a quarterly journal of OCMS, and seek to provide a tripartite view of Christianity's engagement with cultures by focusing on the question: how is Christian thinking being formed or reformed through its interaction with the varied contexts it encounters? The subject matters include different strands of theological-missiological thinking, socio-political engagements and forms of family relationships in interaction with the host cultures.

Tormod Engelsen, Ernst Harbakk, Rolv Olsen, Thor Strandenæs (Eds)

Mission to the World

Communicating the Gospel in the 21st Century:

Essays in Honour of Knud Jørgensen

2008 / 978-1-870345-64-4 / 472pp

Knud Jørgensen is Director of Areopagos and Associate Professor of Missiology at MF Norwegian School of Theology. This book reflects on the main areas of Jørgensen's commitment to mission. At the same time it focuses on the main frontier of mission, the world, the content of mission, the Gospel, the fact that the Gospel has to be communicated, and the context of contemporary mission in the 21st century.

Al Tizon

Transformation after Lausanne

Radical Evangelical Mission in Global-Local Perspective

2008 / 978-1-870345-68-2 / 281pp

After Lausanne '74, a worldwide network of radical evangelical mission theologians and practitioners use the notion of "Mission as Transformation" to integrate evangelism and social concern together, thus lifting theological voices from the Two Thirds World to places of prominence. This book documents the definitive gatherings, theological tensions, and social forces within and without evangelicalism that led up to Mission as Transformation. And it does so through a global-local grid that points the way toward greater holistic mission in the 21st century.

Bambang Budijanto
Values and Participation
Development in Rural Indonesia
2009 / 978-1-870345-70-4 / 237pp

Socio-religious values and socio-economic development are inter-dependant, inter-related and are constantly changing in the context of macro political structures, economic policy, religious organizations and globalization; and micro influences such as local affinities, identity, politics, leadership and beliefs. The book argues that the comprehensive approach in understanding the socio-religious values of each of the three local Lopait communities in Central Java is essential to accurately describing their respective identity.

Alan R. Johnson
Leadership in a Slum
A Bangkok Case Study
2009 / 978-1-870345-71-2 / 238pp

This book looks at leadership in the social context of a slum in Bangkok from a different perspective than traditional studies which measure well educated Thais on leadership scales derived in the West. Using both systematic data collection and participant observation, it develops a culturally preferred model as well as a set of models based in Thai concepts that reflect on-the-ground realities. It concludes by looking at the implications of the anthropological approach for those who are involved in leadership training in Thai settings and beyond.

Titre Ande
Leadership and Authority
Bula Matari and Life - Community Ecclesiology in Congo
2010 / 978-1-870345-72-9 / 189pp

Christian theology in Africa can make significant development if a critical understanding of the socio-political context in contemporary Africa is taken seriously, particularly as Africa's post-colonial Christian leadership based its understanding and use of authority on the Bula Matari model. This has caused many problems and Titre proposes a Life-Community ecclesiology for liberating authority, here leadership is a function, not a status, and 'apostolic succession' belongs to all people of God.

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Frank Kwesi Adams
Odwira and the Gospel
A Study of the Asante Odwira Festival and its Significance for Christianity in Ghana
2010 / 978-1-870345-59-0 / 232pp

The study of the Odwira festival is the key to the understanding of Asante religious and political life in Ghana. The book explores the nature of the Odwira festival longitudinally - in pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence Ghana - and examines the Odwira ideology and its implications for understanding the Asante self-identity. Also discussed is how some elements of faith portrayed in the

Odwira festival can provide a framework for Christianity to engage with Asante culture at a greater depth.

Bruce Carlton

Strategy Coordinator

Changing the Course of Southern Baptist Missions

2010 / 978-1-870345-78-1 / 268pp

This is an outstanding, one-of-a-kind work addressing the influence of the non-residential missionary/strategy coordinator's role in Southern Baptist missions. This scholarly text examines the twentieth century global missiological currents that influenced the leadership of the International Mission Board, resulting in a new paradigm to assist in taking the gospel to the nations.

Julie Ma & Wonsuk Ma

Mission in the Spirit:

Towards a Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology

2010 / 978-1-870345-84-2 / 312pp

The book explores the unique contribution of Pentecostal/Charismatic mission from the beginning of the twentieth century. The first part considers the theological basis of Pentecostal/Charismatic mission thinking and practice. Special attention is paid to the Old Testament, which has been regularly overlooked by the modern Pentecostal/Charismatic movements. The second part discusses major mission topics with contributions and challenges unique to Pentecostal/Charismatic mission. The book concludes with a reflection on the future of this powerful missionary movement. As the authors served as Korean missionaries in Asia, often their missionary experiences in Asia are reflected in their discussions.

S. Hun Kim & Wonsuk Ma (eds.)

Korean Diaspora and Christian Mission

2011-978-1-870345-91-0 / 301pp

As a 'divine conspiracy' for Missio Dei, the global phenomenon of people on the move has shown itself to be invaluable. In 2004 two significant documents concerning Diaspora were introduced, one by the Filipino International Network and the other by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. These have created awareness of the importance of people on the move for Christian mission. Since then, Korean Diaspora has conducted similar research among Korean missions, resulting in this book

Jin Huat Tan

Planting an Indigenous Church

The Case of the Borneo Evangelical Mission

2011 / 978-1-870345-99-6 / 343pp

Dr Jin Huat Tan has written a pioneering study of the origins and development of Malaysia's most significant indigenous church. This is an amazing story of revival, renewal and transformation of the entire region chronicling the powerful effect of

it evident to date! What can we learn from this extensive and careful study of the Borneo Revival, so the global Christianity will become ever more dynamic.

Bill Prevett

Child, Church and Compassion

Towards Child Theology in Romania

2012 / 978-1-908355-03-4 / 377pp

Bill Prevett comments that "children are like 'canaries in a mine shaft'; they provide a focal point for discovery and encounter of perilous aspects of our world that are often ignored." True, but miners also carried a lamp to see into the subterranean darkness. This book is such a lamp. It lights up the subterranean world of children and youth in danger of exploitation, and as it does so travels deep into their lives and also into the activities of those who seek to help them.

Samuel Cyuma

Picking up the Pieces

The Church and Conflict Resolution in South Africa and Rwanda

2012 / 978-1-908355-02-7 / 411pp

In the last ten years of the 20th century, the world was twice confronted with unbelievable news from Africa. First, there was the end of Apartheid in South Africa, without bloodshed, due to responsible political and Church leaders. The second was the mass killings in Rwanda, which soon escalated into real genocide. Political and Church leaders had been unable to prevent this crime against humanity. In this book, the question is raised: can we compare the situation in South Africa with that in Rwanda? Can Rwandan leaders draw lessons from the peace process in South Africa?

GENERAL REGNUM TITLES

Vinay Samuel, Chris Sugden (eds.)
The Church in Response to Human Need
1987 / 1870345045 / xii+268pp

Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, Chris Sugden (eds.)
Faith and Modernity
Essays in modernity and post-modernity
1994 / 1870345177 / 352pp

Klaus Fiedler
The Story of Faith Missions
1994 / 0745926878 / 428pp

Douglas Peterson
Not by Might nor by Power
A Pentecostal Theology of Social Concern in Latin America
1996 / 1870345207 / xvi+260pp

David Gitari
In Season and Out of Season
Sermons to a Nation
1996 / 1870345118 / 155pp

David. W. Virtue
A Vision of Hope
The Story of Samuel Habib
1996 / 1870345169 / xiv+137pp

Everett A Wilson
Strategy of the Spirit
J. Philip Hogan and the Growth of the Assemblies of God Worldwide, 1960 - 1990
1997 / 1870345231/214

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Murray Dempster, Byron Klaus, Douglas Petersen (Eds)
The Globalization of Pentecostalism
A Religion Made to Travel
1999 / 1870345290 / xvii+406pp

Peter Johnson, Chris Sugden (eds.)
Markets, Fair Trade and the Kingdom of God
Essays to Celebrate Traidcraft's 21st Birthday
2001 / 1870345193 / xii+155pp

Robert Hillman, Coral Chamberlain, Linda Harding

Healing & Wholeness

Reflections on the Healing Ministry

2002 / 978-1- 870345-35- 4 / xvii+283pp

David Bussau, Russell Mask

Christian Microenterprise Development

An Introduction

2003 / 1870345282 / xiii+142pp

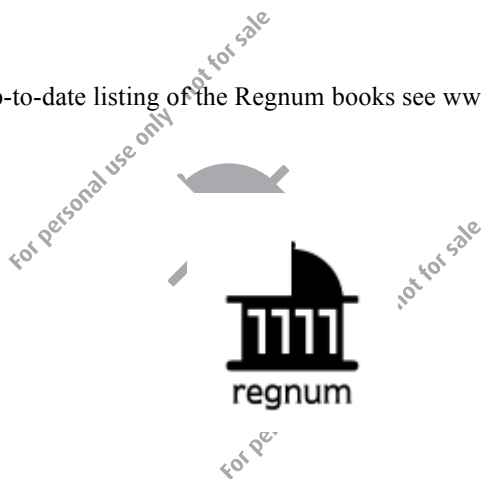
David Singh

Sainthood and Revelatory Discourse

An Examination of the Basis for the Authority of Bayan in Mahdawi Islam

2003 / 8172147285 / xxiv+485pp

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